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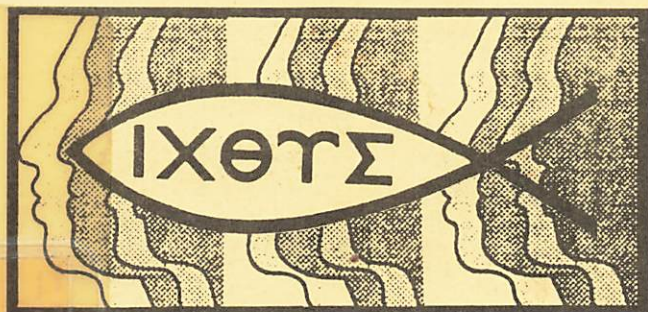


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# MILKFISH IN BRACKISH WATER

FILIPINO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY  
IN AMERICAN CONTEXT



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Wenifredo B. Vergara

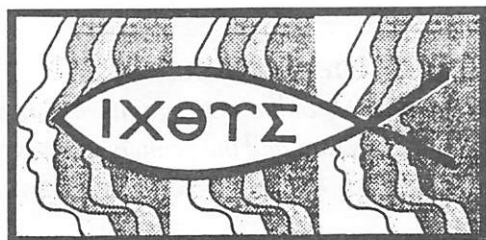


MOORE CENTER  
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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# MILKFISH IN BRACKISH WATER

FILIPINO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY  
IN AMERICAN CONTEXT



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San Jose, California

**DEDICATION**

*In living memory of the 1930's farm workers of  
California and Hawaii and the cannery workers of  
Alaska---the "Manongs" of today's Filipino  
Americans.*

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AT CLAREMONT  
California

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I am grateful to two clergy-friends who introduced me to the Diocese of El Camino Real: Douglas Weiss and Jerry Drino. Weiss, a charismatic "fundamentalist" and Drino, a liberal "syncretist" exemplify the two sides of the American Church. I could not forget the day after Easter when I brought together the two for lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant in downtown San Jose. "That was a great Easter story," remarked the then Bishop Shannon Mallory. For me, it confirmed my faith in Anglicanism---a "via media" church able to hold diversity---a perfect setting for the "milkfish in brackish water."

I am also grateful to my wife, Angela, who encouraged me to put this "wish" into printed form. In the United States, only a few materials were written about Filipino Americans and other ethnic groups because publishers consider ethnic writers "unmarketable." To all those would-be ethnic writers, I say: "If we're crazy enough to write, some people maybe crazy enough to read." My hope of course, is that in-between writing and reading, both writer and reader may learn something.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Filipino ministry is one of the most neglected ethnic ministries in the American Church today. In spite of the phenomenal number of their target population, Filipino American Christians remain marginal in all levels of the Church life and at all levels of the Church activities.

Filipino American churches, especially in the Episcopal Church are largely ineffective in reaching out to unchurched Filipinos, Asians and other racial ethnic groups, not to mention outreach to secularized Anglos. Filipino congregations do not show signs of growth, either in the increase of members or in their spiritual progress and commitment. They are unable to bring out the best from their cultures. They are unable to explore their unique gifts and drink from their own wells. Like their counterparts in the mainline congregations, they either die a natural death or fail to move from survival to renewal.

This work represents a seminal re-thinking of Filipino ministry in the context of an intercultural church and multicultural society. It discusses the various ministry issues relating to Filipino agenda with implications of urging the Church in America towards giving Filipino American ministry the attention it deserves.

Why does Filipino American Ministry deserve attention?

Firstly because Filipinos in America are the earliest and largest Asian immigrant group in the United States. Recent historical discoveries claim that the earliest Filipinos came to the United States way back in 1765 when a group of Luzon "indios" working as slaves in the Spanish Galleon Trade jumped ship and settled in the bayous of Louisiana. From 1900 (when the Philippines became a colony of the United States), until today (when the U.S. bases in the Philippines are being dismantled), waves upon waves of Filipinos immigrants flow incessantly. Second only to the Mexicans, the Filipinos now comprise the largest immigrant group coming from one nation. They are among the most

literate, the most upwardly mobile and the most progressive racial ethnic populations.

Second, there is a special historical relationship between the Philippines and the United States. Filipinos were under American tutelage from 1898 (when the U.S. Navy defeated the Spanish Armada and took over the control of Philippine Islands) until 1946 (when the U.S. allied forces defeated the Japanese imperial army). The "American image" is within the various socio-economic and political structures of the Philippines as well as within the Filipino mindset. The vestiges of American imperialism is still seen in the Philippine military, economic and political structures. When the White House sneezes, Malacanang gets the flu; when the New York Stock Exchange gets nervous, Manila's Makati District gets a heart attack. American interest in the Philippines is not abstract. The presence of two large U.S. military bases in the Philippines (Clark AirBase and Subic Naval Base) ensures American hegemony in Asia.

Thirdly, because Filipinos can serve as "bridge persons" in America's emerging new pluralism. Filipinos and other Asians share a common geographic origin in the Asia Pacific basin. Filipinos and Hispanics share a common colonial history from Spain. Filipinos and Blacks share a common experience of slavery and oppression. Filipinos and Native Americans share a common religious heritage and indigenous belief in environmental spirits.

Fourthly and finally, because Filipinos are heirs of over four centuries of Christian cultures and traditions. From 1521 to 1898, Filipinos were under unbridled Roman Catholicism brought about by Spanish colonization. From 1900 until today, Filipinos came under the spell of American Protestantism and *laizze faire* evangelicalism. Every Filipino in Metro Manila knows Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II. Every Filipino who grew up in the Philippines must have attended a church, joined a Christmas caroling and participated in some reenactment of Christ's crucifixion.

More than any people in Asia, Filipinos have been chosen and made ready by God to be "missioners" and "co-bringers" of the whole gospel to the whole



world. The challenge is to make them see this vision of their mission and to enable them to express it in the lives they lead and the relationship they create.

In looking for images that would best capture Filipino American Christian Ministry, I came upon the picture of the milkfish, the national fish of the Philippines. Milkfish or "**bangus**" thrives on brackish water, the admixture of fresh water that comes from the mountain rivers and salty water that comes from the sea. It is in this rotunda, this intersection, that milkfish are raised.

Filipinos coming to America are always confronted by a dualistic, bifurcated, double-standard, and dichotomized Western culture. Westerners "split" everything, from atom to marriage. Black and White, hostility and hospitality, racism and paternalism, liberalism and fundamentalism, civilized and barbaric, work and play, etc.. This is the context in which Filipino Americans and other immigrants find themselves. If they are to survive and thrive, they must learn to live in this context. Not accepting nor rejecting "either or" but embracing "both and." Like milkfish in brackish water.

Filipino American Ministry as servant of Christianity must learn from the ways of the milkfish. Rather than acquiescing or rejecting the great American ambiguity, it must bring out its own innate gift. This gift is the gift of reconciliation, the gift bestowed by the Master-Fisherman who wishes all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

Fred Vergara  
San Jose, California  
May 1992

## AMERICA IS IN THE HEART

*America is not a land of one race or class or institution  
It is in the hearts of those who sought and died for freedom  
It is in the eyes of those who seek to build a new world  
America is a prophecy of a new society.*

*America is also the nameless foreigner, the homeless refugee,  
the hungry veteran begging for a job, the naked body crying for justice.*

*America is also the illiterate immigrant who is ashamed that the world of  
books and intellectual opportunities is closed to him and who hopes  
and prays for an opportunity.*

*We are all that nameless foreigner, that homeless refugee,  
that hungry veteran, that naked body, that illiterate immigrant.  
All of us---from the first Indian who offered peace in Manhattan  
to the last Filipino peapicker in California, native born or alien,  
educated or illiterate---We are America!*

(Adapted from the Letters of Carlos Bulosan, written in  
California during the Great Depression of the 1930's )

## SECTION ONE

### CONTEXTUALIZATION

The term "contextualization" refers to the application of the Gospel to the living situations of our time. It is the proclamation of the Christian message into the contemporary situation in which people find themselves. The bible is revealed in and through a specific community but it is so internal that it becomes universal. The preaching of the universal gospel message (text) must be incarnated into the peculiarity of a specific community (context).

Contextualization goes beyond indigenization and enculturation. Indigenization often connotes folk culture and traditions, rustic and tribal customs and quaint mannerisms. Enculturation often connotes an indiscriminate infusion of foreign cultures and absorption or imitation of invading cultures. Contextualization includes both indigenization and enculturation---and presses beyond. It comprises both the nativistic, nascent and insipient cultures as well as modernity, secularization, technology and the clash and dialogue of traditions.

In the context of Filipino Americans, let us first restate the classical differences between East and West: the place where Filipinos come from (Asia) and the place where they now find themselves (the United States of America).

#### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Economic conditions
2. Life in general
3. Political system
4. Philosophy
5. Tradition
6. View of history
7. View of time
8. Life's goal
9. Worldview
10. Classification

#### ASIA

Survival  
To be lived  
Authoritarian  
Symbolic  
Mystical  
Cyclical  
Process  
Endurance  
Embractive  
(yin-yang)  
3rd World

#### U.S.A.

Affluence  
Work and play  
Democratic  
Rational  
Materialist  
Linear  
Goal  
Success  
Dualistic  
(good or bad)  
1st World

Contextualization asks the questions: How do we proclaim the gospel of Christ to the total context in which Filipino Americans (and other immigrant peoples ) find themselves ? How do we apply the liberating message of the Bible (written from Judeo-Christian context) to living realities of Filipinos in California? Kosuke Koyama, a Japanese theologian posed the question:"How do we bridge the two mountains, Mt. Sinai and Mt. Fuji?" For Filipino Americans, how do we bridge Mt. Sinai, Mt. Pinatubo and Silicon Valley? How can the liberating message of Christ be applied to the suffering and hope, the joys and confusions, the fears and wonders of immigrant peoples in the United States?

Like many marginalized peoples, Filipino Americans are divided culturally and historically. They struggle with the question of identity: who am I and what am I? In one Filipino American mind, there are a number of historico-cultural identities: Pre-Spanish Philippines Filipino; Spanish-era Colonial Philippines Filipino; American-era colonial Philippines Filipino; Japanese-era colonial Philippines Filipino; Independent Philippines Filipino; Marcos' martial-law Philippines Filipino ; Cory's restored-Democracy Philippines Filipino ; new immigrant Filipino-in-America; hyphenated Filipino-American; and assimilated non-hyphenated , naturalized Filipino American.

With all these admixture of identities, is it any wonder if the Filipinos could not even understand themselves? With all their confounded longings, how can the gospel be a liberating force for their unity? And how can their freedom and unity in Christ be contagious to the evangelization of their fellow immigrants?

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## CHAPTER 1

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### *FILIPINO AMERICAN DEMOGRAPHY*

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Demography is the study of population: their characteristics, size, growth and vital statistics. In discussing the Filipino American demographics, the following terminologies need clarification:

1. **Philippines** means country of origin. Situated in the Far East, the Philippines consists of 7,107 islands and islets. Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer under the employ of King Carlos I of Spain was the acknowledged "discoverer", although Chinese traders had long been frequenting the islands prior to his coming in March 17, 1521. (Spanish historian Pigafetta put the date of March 16 on his journal. He forgot that he had crossed the International dateline). The name "*Felipinas*" was given by the succeeding Spanish expeditions (led by Villalobos and Dela Torre) in honor of King Philip II, successor to King Charles.

2. **Philippine** is an adjective used to describe places or things (e.g. Philippine islands, Philippine village, Philippine mahogany, etc.).

3. **Filipinos** (with and "F") means people of the Philippines. Sometimes the singular "Filipino" is used as an adjective similar to "Philippine" (e.g. Filipino house, Filipino food, Filipino character, etc.).

4. **Filipino** (with a "P") refers to the national language of the Philippines. It is also known as the *Tagalog* language. In history, Tagalog was proclaimed in 1897 as the official language by Emilio Aguinaldo, president of the short-lived first Philippine Republic. It is to be noted that there are over 100 Filipino dialects and that *Tagalog* (the language of Manila and surrounding provinces) share practically the same status as *Ilokano*, *Visayan*, and *English* as the languages spoken by majority.

5. **Filipino American** is an arbitrary term denoting Filipino immigrants and naturalized citizens in the United States. There is a current debate about the

terms "*Filipinos in America*" and "*Filipino-Americans*." President Cory Aquino in his first state visit to the United States in 1986 said, "*You can take the Filipinos out of the Philippines but you can't take the Philippines out of the Filipinos.*" Dennis Normandy, president of the national Filipino American Council said: "*If we are to move forward as a community, we have to be Americans. That is the only way we are going to achieve our rightful place in American society.*" In its recent editorial, the **Philippine News**, the largest Filipino newspaper in the United States decided to drop the hyphen from the "Filipino-American" saying:

*"We are Filipinos, yes, but we are also Americans. The best of two worlds. With no punctuation mark to mark us any less American than those who came from the other side of the globe with lighter pigmentation.*

*"Rare are the occasions when the ethnicities of (English) or European origin are spelled with a hyphen. But for people of color, the punctuation mark is wedded, as if to mean new, as if to mean different.*

*"The auto industry's Lee Iaccoca is not described as Italian-American and Senator Edward Kennedy's Irish ancestry is mentioned only in the most romantic sense. Nativistic society sees them as Americans, period., but have a different view of U.S. born progeny of those who built the railroads and tended the farms of the West.*

*"Perhaps in the future we will be thought of and referred to as Americans sans modifier, but for now it is our choice to be called Filipino Americans, meaning Americans of Filipino descent."*

## THE 1990 U.S. CENSUS ON FILIPINO AMERICANS

The 1990 U.S. Census places the number of Filipino Americans to be 1.7 million. Second only to the Mexican immigrants, the Filipinos in America are the largest ethnic group coming from any one country. They are larger than all the Chinese Americans combined (i.e. from China, Hongkong, Taiwan, Singapore, etc.) which totals 1.5 million.

The U.S. immigration office in San Francisco, the Philippine Embassy and many analysts consider the Census figures to be conservative estimates due the fact of many undocumented aliens. For Filipinos, there were many who did not return the Census forms. Filipino surnames are also often mistaken for Hispanic Americans. It is therefore likely that the actual number of Filipinos in America is more than 2 million.

In the past decade alone (1980-1990), about 400,000 Filipinos (40,000 annually) entered the United States. Heavy concentration of Filipinos are found in California, Hawaii, Guam and New York. In metropolitan areas of Illinois, Texas, Washington and Florida there are also large Filipino populations.

In California, the hub of Asian immigration, the Filipinos remained the biggest, the Vietnamese grew the fastest, and the Chinese added the most number of new immigrants. This latter phenomenon is brought about by the sudden exodus of people from Hongkong (China will take over from the British in 1997) and the influx of political refugees from mainland China (due to the tense political situation).

From 1980 to 1990, Filipino Americans in California grew 100% to a total of 731,685. Again, it is likely that the number would be about one million. Ranked from largest to smallest, the over-all Asian populations in California are: Filipinos, 26 %; Chinese, 25%; Japanese, 11%; Vietnamese, 9.9%; Koreans, 9.1%; and Asian Indians, 6.6%. The rest of the Asian populations are made up of smaller groups like the Taiwanese, Thais, Laos, Cambodians and Hmongs.

The flow of Asian immigrants during the 1980's was divided into "two streams," according to Census authorities. One stream is stimulated by the large number of people already established in the United States. Filipinos, Chinese and Koreans, upon obtaining U.S. citizenship, would typically petition for their relatives. These new arrivals are often described as "highly educated," and fall under the employment provisions of the U.S. immigration laws. The other stream is comprised of refugees and immigrants from embattled Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia who come as a "result of U.S. policies following the end of the Vietnam War and the unstable political and economic conditions of their home countries."

According to Robert Gardner, a demographer at the East West Population Institute in Honolulu, the immigration trends remain "pretty much the same in the early 90's as they were in the 80's." The only exception, Gardner added, is the leveling off of the big and dramatic immigrations, which was a phenomenon in the late 70's and the whole of 80's. Gardner also predicted that both the Filipinos and the Vietnamese (due to open-ended first generation immigration and the rapid birthrate of established immigrants) would constitute half of California's Asian population sometime between 2010 and 2020.

This reality of Filipino and Vietnamese statistics is now being seen in big Californian cities like San Jose, San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles as well as in smaller ones like Milpitas, Vallejo, West Covina and Daly City.

## **SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

From the demographic profile of the U.S. Census, Filipinos are considered one of the most upwardly mobile ethnic groups in the United States. They are highly literate, achievers in major fields of endeavor, relatively affluent and possess skills which put them in the competitive edge in the American socio-economic market. Because of their facility in English language and political sophistication, Filipino Americans are becoming a potential force in the shaping of a new multicultural configuration in American body politic.

The term "model minority" being applied to Filipinos and Asians in particular, however, is being debunked as a myth by many analysts. Evidences regarding the socio-economic status of Asian Americans in the last decade is described by William P. O'Hare, director of the Population Analysis at the Urban Institute of the University of Louisville and by Judy Felt, research demographer at the Population Reference Bureau, as a "mixed picture of achievement." Asian immigrants have an average family income "slightly higher than that of non-Hispanic Whites (i.e. Anglo/Euro Americans)" but chiefly because Asian homes have "more family members working." Generally speaking, the poverty rate of Asian Americans continue to rise to "nearly twice that of non-Hispanic Whites."



The paradox is not unique, according to O'Hare and Felt. Like all other Americans, new immigrants are subject to the process of "economic polarization," which characterize income patterns in general. Where the poor immigrants tend to gravitate towards those of their economic background, the more "established" or affluent counterparts join the ranks of their financial equals. In other words, the socioeconomic segmentation has as much to do as racial ethnic diversification.

In the total Asian American scene, Japanese and Taiwanese immigrants are the wealthiest and the Laotians earn the least. Filipino males stand shoulder to shoulder with Koreans and Chinese Americans. In comparing with the non-Hispanic Whites, however, the Filipino males earn only half or two-thirds the income of the Whites.

Much of the reasons for this inequality are blamed on the built-in, structural racism. Racial ethnic minorities complain of "glass ceiling" in the issue of promotion. Despite their high professional achievements back home, many are unemployed or underemployed because their educational attainments are not duly recognized. It is not uncommon to find medical doctors working as orderlies in dental clinics, lawyers working as office clerks, engineers as insurance agents and teachers working as electronics assembly workers.

Analyzing the Census findings, there is nothing to indicate that Asians in general are successful small business persons. There were only 55 Asian-owned ventures for every 1,000 Asians in 1982 in contrast to 76 White-owned businesses out of every 1,000 Whites. Most Asian businesses are Japanese, Chinese and Koreans. Filipino Americans rarely excel in business and trade. They tend to be more adept and successful in service-oriented professions.

There are very few Filipinos among the homeless. This does not mean there are more home ownership among Filipinos in particular and Asians in general. The Census revealed that only 54% of Asians owned their homes in 1990 compared with 74% for Whites. The reason for the low "homelessness" among Filipinos and Asians is their strong kinship system. They take pride in the

extended family and **barrio** (village) systems that support and offer hospitality to relatives and friends who are otherwise homeless or dispossessed.

The slow rate of Filipino American homeownership indicates that they do not accumulate the same wealth with their White counterparts. When they do purchase homes however, these houses "tend to be more valuable than those of the Whites." Oftentimes, these residential houses are found in metropolitan areas and the suburbs. It is rare for Filipino Americans and Asians nowadays to live in rural areas. Their fascination for expensive homes often causes problems because while they can put up down payment from their hard-earned savings, many of them are unable to sustain the monthly mortgages on a more regular basis.

Although Filipinos, even new immigrants, are able to easily assimilate with the mainstream American lifestyle, they prefer to find their support in the kinship system and the Filipino association. There is a Filipino **barrio** within every cluster of Filipino communities. In California alone, there are thousands of Filipino clubs divided along fraternal, linguistic, regional, professional, and other human interest lines. It is said that there are two things which the Filipino immigrant brings in his suitcase: the statue of the **Santo Nino** (icon of the Holy Child Jesus) and the list of his **kababayan** (barrio mates).

There is growing assertiveness of Filipino Americans for community and for political empowerment as seen in the proliferation of Filipino periodicals and magazines. All over the United States, hundreds of Filipino newspapers are contesting for Filipino readership and championing immigration issues. Video and audio cassettes coming from Manila are becoming very popular as they connect Filipino Americans with situations back home. Filipino newspapers, especially the nationwide **Philippine News** (with central office in South San Francisco) not only provides up to date news accounts on the Philippine elections but also drums up passionate support for Filipino Americans trying to enter into the mainline American political system.

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## CHAPTER 2

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### *FILIPINO AMERICAN IMMIGRATION*

The coming of the Filipinos to America dates back from the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines (circa 1521 -1898). Marina Estrella Espina, chief librarian at the University of New Orleans discovered that the first Filipinos came to the "brave new world" in 1763 through the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade. Espina's historical study established the theory that these "Manilamen" or "Luzon Indians" established the "Malong" town in the bayous of Louisiana. It is a common belief that these Spanish-speaking "Indios" were maltreated by their Spanish masters that they decided to "jump ship" and settled in America.

These early Filipino Americans were also called the "shrimp people" figuratively because they swam in the swamps and literally because they initiated the "shrimp drying" industry of New Orleans. They were versatile fishermen as they were expert tradesmen and diplomats. It is said that their shrimp business later became exports to Canada and Mexico. They also assimilated easily with Native Indians and Mexicans. It is further said that they participated in the fight for American Independence in 1776.

Philippine Revolution in 1898 brought an end to Spanish colonial rule in Asia and ushered in American imperialism. The early Filipino Americans were relegated into the dustbin of history. No one cared to follow up their plight. It is theorized that they intermarried with Native Americans and Mexicans and totally identified with the adapted society.

Meanwhile, the advent of American rule over the Philippines gave a special distinction for the Filipinos to be called "brown Americans." Americanized mass education and sanitation were implemented in the islands. As a vassal of the United States, it was open season for Filipinos to emigrate to the U.S. "mainland." This new relationship between the "brave new world" of the Americas and the "emancipated islands" in the Far East gave rise to three humongous waves of Filipino immigration to the United States.

## THE FIRST WAVE (1903 - 1930)

The first wave of Filipino immigrants to the United States came at this period of honeymoon between the Philippines and its imperial master. The new Filipino American immigrants were divided into two distinct groups: the rich scholars and the poor farmers. On the one hand, this classification indicated the prevalent socio-economic stratification of Spanish-era colonial Philippine society and the apparent American policy of perpetuating this division. On the other hand, it pointed to the American goal of "manifest destiny," that of transplanting American democracy into the Far East and restructuring the feudal system held in place by over four centuries of Spanish colonialism.

As early as 1903, young and brilliant Filipino students came to the United States under the patronage of the U.S. government. The American policy makers, moved by Mc Kinley's "benevolent assimilation" wanted these students to observe and to absorb the American ideas and ideals of self-government. They were to be prepared as the "avant garde" of American-style democracy. Given the accolade "fountain pen boys," they excelled in the fields of politics, economics, education, engineering, medicine, law and rhetorics.

By 1938, there were over 14,000 "fountain pen boys" in various American colleges and universities. Many of them went back to their homeland and took political offices during and after American regime. Others, however, stayed in the U.S. and practiced in their fields of endeavor while at the same time maintaining links back home in the Philippines.

The other group of immigrants in this wave came to the United States to supply the much-needed manpower in the farms of California and Hawaii and the fishing and canneries of Alaska. Many of these sugar cane workers, pineapple planters and pea pickers, fishermen and cannery workers were recruited from the Ilocos region in the Philippines. These young Ilocano males (16- 21 years old) made up the "Filipino American Bachelor Society." They were not allowed to bring in their wives from the Philippines. They could not marry Filipino brides because of the absence of Filipino females in the immigration policy. They were not allowed to get married with White females due to the

strict miscegenation laws existing at the time. They were later to be called the "manongs," symbolizing their sacrificial pioneering work in the United States.

When the great depression of the 1930's created a surplus of farm and cannery workers, emigration from the Philippines abruptly declined. From 1909 to 1931, there were 113,000 Filipinos in Hawaii. Of these 55,000 remained in Hawaii; 39,000 returned to the Philippines; and 18,600 moved to California as migrant workers.

The "bachelor society" which came to California underwent the worst experience of American racism, as farmer-poet Carlos Bulosan would later recount. A history of racist attacks against these Filipino Americans is recorded in Washington's Yakima Valley in 1928 and California's San Joaquin Valley in 1929. A racist incident also happened in Watsonville, California in 1930 when a group of Filipino farmers leased a dance hall and hired some White women for partners. A White vigilante group resented the occasion and an attack ensued. One Filipino farmer was killed and scores of others were wounded.

## **THE SECOND WAVE (World War II - 1960)**

The second wave Filipino immigrants were largely dominated by Filipinos employed as crewmen of the U.S. Navy; war brides and dependents of the American G.I.'s; seamen of American merchant marine ships; members of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) who took part in the Asia - Pacific War. This immigration trend was made possible by the War Brides Act which followed the "liberation of the Philippines from Japan" in 1946.

At this time, the Filipinos enjoyed a very favorable image to Americans. The Filipino soldiers, known for their valor and bravery, fought side by side with Americans against the Japanese Imperial Army. The towering image of General Douglas MacArthur wading alongside the diminutive General Carlos Romulo (who would later become Secretary General of the United Nations) in the famous American landing in the seacoast of Leyte (southeastern Philippines) re-conjured the image of Filipino-American Friendship. At about the same time, there was the relaxation (and eventually the abolition) of the strict

miscegenation laws and so it was possible for Filipino males to get married with White females just as it was evidently alright for American males to marry Filipino brides.

One distinguishing characteristic of this Second Wave immigrants was their preference for urban centers rather than rural areas. In Chicago, they found civil service jobs. In Philadelphia, they were in navy yards. In Los Angeles, New York City and Washington D.C., they were mostly drifters, taking temporary jobs as waiters, taxi drivers, bellboys, and domestic servants. In contrast to the First Wave immigrants who wrote stories of racist oppression, they weaved tales of adventure, progress and "get rich quick." They were the precursors of the Filipino American dreams and schemes.

### **THE THIRD WAVE (1965 - 1980'S)**

The third wave immigrants were ushered in by the Immigration Act of 1965 raising the quota of Filipino immigrants from 100 to 20,000 annually, giving special preferences to professionals and skilled workers. Overtime, Filipino professionals---doctors, nurses, engineers, lawyers, accountants, dentists, teachers, scientists, clergy---swamped the U.S.. Embassy in Manila dreaming of the "green card." From 1965 to 1969 alone, Filipino immigration rose by 200 percent. The Philippines was at a critical point of "brain drain" as its educational and government offices were being emptied by immigration hopefuls.

The socioeconomic and political crises following the declaration by President Ferdinand Marcos of Martial Law in 1972 only exacerbated the Filipino flight to America. Even as there was a policy of "exit permits" from the Philippine government, hordes of Filipino "political refugees" immigrated to the United States. Graft and corruption prevalent in government bureaucracies made possible the sale of "exit permits" to Filipino "tourists" who took the opportunity to get out of the Philippines for good. It was common for Filipino political and social activists at that time to say they only had two places to go to: "U.S." or "U.G." (United States or UnderGround).

The rapid and open-ended Third Wave immigration made possible the entry

of Filipino cultural baggage and kinship system. Upon arriving in the United States, these new immigrants would typically petition for their family and relatives to join them, financing their trips, providing them temporary housing and assisting them to find jobs.

Due to the fact that most of them were professionals, well-educated and very literate in both oral and written English, the Third Wave immigrants easily integrated in the mainstream American systems. In sharp contrast to the First Wave immigrants who found it difficult to find a wife, the Third Wave immigration brought an imbalance of females to males. Immigration records from 1966 to 1971 listed 47,599 Filipino males to 66,517 females. In 1980, the ratio of female to male was 2 to 1.5. This phenomenon was largely due to the high proportion of nurses and female professionals coming from the medical and other service-oriented professions.

As the Third Wave immigrants found their niches in the American society, they began to influence the political events back home. Filipinos with high profiles went into "self exiles" in America only to maintain a safe haven while waging a campaign to oust Marcos. The Manglapuzes, Lopezes, Osmenas and other opposition stalwarts fired their salvos from the safe shore of the United States prompting Marcos to label them "steak commandos."

Aside from influencing the American media to take a cursory look on the Marcos Regime, Filipino "political refugees" in the United States launched their own newspapers. By 1975, there were twenty Filipino weekly publications in the United States, more than half opposing the Marcos dictatorship. Marcos, of course, lost no time in sending both money and personnel to publish his own "remote control" newspapers, thus fomenting a climate of political division among many Filipinos in America. This division came to a head in 1985 when a "people power" revolution in the Philippines brought an end to the Marcos presidency and catapulted Corazon Aquino, the widow of Senator Benigno Aquino (himself an exile in the United States) to power.

The phenomenal rise of Aquino and the ironic twist of fate for the Marcoses would have ended political division among Filipinos in America had not been

for the fact that President Aquino failed to deliver an economic miracle to stabilize Philippine situations. The Marcos romanticists wanted to revive the bygone Marcos era when "there was discipline and order"; Aquino sympathizers wanted to glory in the "restoration of democracy." Meanwhile, as the new political ferment brews in Philippine politics, the Third Wave immigration continues to flow and its political fragmentation continues unabated.





## CHAPTER 3

### *FILIPINO AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES*

The Filipino race is a unique blend of Malay-Polynesian, Chinese, Indian, Arab and Persian origins. Spanish and North American influences were spiced into their bloodstream during the 400 years of Western colonialization. It is therefore inappropriate to use the term "pure Filipino" when referring to Filipinos as a race or cultural entity.

This assertion does not mean Filipinos do not have a culture of their own. A neat observation was made by Stanley Karnow in his book, **In Our Image: American Empire in the Philippines**. A veteran journalist and Philippine observer, Karnow wrote: *"Most of the Filipino people I met spoke American English. They knew far more about the United States than I knew about the Philippines, as if they were some kind of lost American tribe that had somehow detached from the U.S. mainland and floated across the Pacific. But with each successive visits (to the Philippines), I perceived that their values and traditions, though frequently concealed under an American veneer, were their own---and often antithetical to the American model."*

In dealing with Filipino American cultural values, it is helpful to know the dynamics between indigenous values, enculturated values and contextualized values subsumed earlier in the understanding of contextualization. The Filipino immigrant brings with him latent indigenous values which encounters mainline American (often White, Anglo or EuroAmerican) cultural values. The Filipino, being by nature flexible, readily adjusts to this encounter by "enculturating" or "assimilating" or adding into his system this new culture. He does this adaptation not necessarily because he values this "foreign" culture more than his "indigenous" culture. Rather, he tries to internalize this "extra-cultural influence" in order to gain acceptance. Pliant like the bamboo, he "sways" to this new influence rather than break down the communication.

This characteristic Filipino adaptability often moves back and forth, as if

trying to test the limits of imitation as well as his own "sense of shame." Sometimes he may become too copious and "act more than an American" (in dress, hair style, mannerisms, etc.). At other times, he may show some hostility and express contempt on what he deemed vulgar and ugly American values. In all these trials and experimentation, his main aim is for acceptance from both his fellow Filipinos as well as from within the mainline American value system.

## **HIERARCHY OF FILIPINO NEEDS**

The great social scientist Max Weber, underscored the "hierarchy of human needs" to be the following: economic needs, social needs, aesthetic needs, and the needs for self-actualization. Universally, human beings move from one ladder to another in this hierarchical pyramid.

The hierarchy of goals for indigenous Filipinos start with social acceptance (**may pakisama**) rather than economic sufficiency. A common saying among "traditional" Filipinos is "**Hindi baleng walang pera, huwag lang walang hiya.**" (Better be poor than be shameless). Filipinos are not confrontative by nature. They are sensitive to personal affront. They dread rejection. For this reason, they prefer to use "**parinig**" (going around the bush) or euphemistic words instead of direct statements or demands. In dealing with personal and socially-sensitive issues, they use mediums or "go-between" rather than direct confrontation. Truth is secondary to interpersonal relationship.

The need for economic security (**may kaya**) follows the need for social acceptance. In spite of their apparent lack of economic strivings, indigenous Filipinos are dreamers of economic paradise. They dream of "getting rich quick" as evidenced by their love of the lottery. They are deeply fatalistic believing in "**suerte**" (luck). The meaning of faith and fate are inextricably intertwined.

Socioeconomic mobility (**may lakas**) is third in the hierarchy of Filipino goals. There are two sides of this cultural value. Positively, it energizes Filipinos to strive harder in order to improve their lot. Negatively, it breeds graft and corruption. Political structures in Philippines are known to be operating more on "**palakasan**" (pull) rather than the merit system. Career promotions in civic,

military, political and even business endeavors are often tainted by nepotism and the ever-present "**padrino**" (patronage) system.

Self-actualization (**may pagkabayani**) is the apex of Filipino cultural goals. This is often associated with one's SIR (smooth interpersonal relationship) and personal heroism. It is a sensitivity (**amor propio**) to personal honor, dignity, integrity and self-esteem. Within every Filipino there is a deep and sacred honor that will not bear shame and degradation. He maybe pushed too far but when it reached to the limit of losing his honor, he will be shamed and may become "**juramentado**" (amok). When it reaches to this point, the indigenous Filipino would offer his life. It is better to die with honor than to live with dishonor.

## ENCULTURATED FILIPINO VALUES

The culture of extended family and kinship system (a Chinese filial piety influence) pervades in almost all levels of Filipino life and all aspects of their relationships. Traditional Filipino families are patriarchal and hierarchical. Respect and recognition are given to persons by virtue of their age, socioeconomic status, professions and their ability to wield economic, social and political power. The word "**po**" is given to persons of "powerful" standing.

The basic temper of the Filipinos were of Malay origin. Some of their character traits like industry, thrift, frugality and patience were of Chinese influence. Other traits such as the love of art, music and dancing were of Indian influence. Over time, indigenous Filipinos had enculturated the customs and traditions they found in their neighboring nations.

Filipino values are also embedded in religious structures and the most pervasive was the four centuries of Spanish colonization. As in most Asian mindset, culture and religion are inextricably intertwined. Catholicism was forced upon the natives from 1521 to 1898. Threatened by the Spanish "Cross and Sword" (guns and canons as well), indigenous Filipinos accepted the outward form of Western faith. Inwardly however, they retained their indigenous religious practices. In other words, while outwardly showing devo-

tions to Catholic saints, relics and spiritual exercises, they inwardly treasured their ancient veneration of their **anitos** (nativistic icons) and pristine animistic spiritual traditions. Instead of rejecting one and totally accepting the other, the traditional Filipinos accommodated the foreign and nascent and superimposed them into the native and primordial.

This sense of Filipino accommodation has given rise to what is known as "folk Christianity," the unique admixture of Catholic rituals and traditional animistic practices. Father Jaime Bulatao, S.J., a noted Philippine sociologist described this unique Filipino spirituality as "split level." Filipinos hear the gospel but apply it in the background of their pre-Christian beliefs. They hear about the personal and heavenly Father "who guides the destiny of people and nations" and they apply this idea of Providence to their own **Bahala Na** (fatalistic) philosophy. They hear about Sin and Salvation and they apply these concepts to their own sense of **gaba** (divine punishment) and **awa** (divine mercy).

For almost every Christian precept, there is one indigenous religious pocket with which to put it. As Filipinos come to join Catholic processions and festivals, they empty these pockets (literally they also spend lots of money) and display these foreign treasures. When they go back home and found themselves broke and exhausted, they take out their nativistic treasures from their secret **kaban** (wooden treasure chest) and comfort themselves.

In this enculturated value, success and failure in life are not the results of one's efforts or lack of them. Rather, they are two sides of the same coin: the **awa** and **gaba** of God. When one obtains the **awa** (mercy, grace) of God, "*Hesus-Maria-Jose!*", he is such a lucky man (**masuerte!**). When one incurs the **gaba** (wrath, punishment) of God, "*puera buyag!*" (May God forbid!), he is of most people to be pitied (**kawawa naman**).

"Split level Christianity" is therefore "split" only as far as the articulation of the faith is concerned. Their unity is found in how Filipinos apply their own sense of justice. They are able to take oppression up to a certain limit by applying the **awa** and **gaba** of God. "God will have mercy on us and will punish the oppressor. We don't have to do anything." When they are pushed to the

wall, they abandon this articulation and become "**juramentado**" (lose themselves) and execute justice. When they succeed, they have the **awa** (mercy, grace, approval) of God; when they fail, they have the **gaba** (punishment, disgrace, disapproval) of God. Divine mercy calls for **utang na loob** (gratitude); divine punishment calls for repentance and restitution. Both gratitude and repentance bring forgiveness, closeness and family unity.

## CONTEXTUAL FILIPINO AMERICAN VALUES

As Filipinos settle in the United States, they find these traditional concepts being put to the test. Pliant like the bamboo, they would sway with the winds of change. They remain in that position but would snap back after the storm. In other words, they tend to acquiesce to the dominant culture up to a certain point. At sometime, they may take a "fight" attitude, complaining about the drastic clash of cultures. At other times, they may swing to the other side of the pendulum and copy everything they find in the dominant culture. At most times, however, they simply take a "temporary flight" from their own accustomed culture. If they find everything safe and secure, they may opt for the renaissance or the bringing back of their own culture.

A typical illustration of this dynamics is seen in the study done by the multicultural staff of the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California. This study and analysis revealed some interesting cultural differentiations among the three waves of Filipino immigrations and the corresponding generations that proceeded each immigration wave.

In the First Wave Filipino Immigration (1903-1930), the first generation (grandparents) were frustrated with American culture because of the racist oppression they experienced especially during the Great Depression; the second generation (parents) suffered "identity crisis" as they were born and raised in America with Filipino parents "bred in oppression"; the third generation (grandchildren) become angry and expressive of their loss of identity; and their fourth generation (great grandchildren) are seeking "renaissance" and "relearning" of their ancestral cultures. The greatest gift to the fourth generation

of the First Wave is a trip to the Philippine provinces.

In the Second Wave Filipino Immigration (World War II - 1960), the first generation (grandparents) readily assimilated with the dominant American culture because they were either wives of American G.I.'s, soldiers of the USAFFE (United States Armed Forces in the Far East) or seamen with the U.S. Navy and merchant marine. Their second generation (parents) felt that they were "pushed to be Americanized" as a matter of necessity and survival. Their third generation (children) felt "more marginalized."

In the Third Wave Filipino Immigration (1965 - 1980's), the first generation (grandparents), readily adapted to the dominant culture because of their educational and professional backgrounds. They not only found their American Dream (house and credit cards) but are able to maintain it. Their second generation (parents) inherit their desire for the American Dream but found it hard to attain. They were not as educationally and experientially trained as their first generation. As a result they are both resentful of their parents' homeland (the Philippines) as well as their own (the United States). There is a high rate of school drop-outs among the teenagers of this generation, a high divorce-rate among the marrieds, and a lot of dysfunctional families .

Filipino gangs also come from this generation of the Third Wave. Coming from affluent parents who are fully assimilated to the Anglo American values of work, they have not experienced being nurtured in traditional Filipino values. Being left to grow up with parents who barely have quality time with them, they learn their values from the personalities they encounter in schools, shopping centers, movies, televisions and video games. Unable to imitate their parents who are professionals or career-oriented, they lose themselves in some form of cultural experimentation. In some sense, they are searching for values that could hold them together and ensure their sanity. Married couples of this generation have babies being bred in this climate of meaninglessness and lack of long-term direction. They need help.

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## SECTION TWO

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### *FILIPINO AMERICAN CHRISTIAN HISTORY*

Ministry can not exist from vacuum . In order to fully understand the dynamics of Filipino American ministry, it is imperative that we must trace the historical roots of Filipino Christianity and the Filipino religious community that co-produced it.

Histories of colonized people often suffer from the fact that history books were written by their former colonial masters. The facts were sifted, characters classified and events interpreted from the perspectives of the colonizers. In many ways, history is part fact, part fiction and mostly interpretation. As Mark Twain said concerning the many theories on who really discovered America:

*" The researches of many commentators have already thrown much darkness on the subject, and it is probable that, if they continue, we shall soon know nothing at all about it."*

Rather than propounding new "theories" or "researches" on the subject of Philippine history, the author therefore deems it appropriate to recount what have already been written in many recognized textbooks on Philippine history, most especially **The History of the Filipino People**, written by Teodoro Agoncillo, history professor at the University of the Philippines.

## CHAPTER 4

### *HISPANIZATION AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

Christianity in the Philippines must have evolved even without the prodding of Spanish colonization. Before the coming of the Spaniards, the indigenous people were already living under the Sumakwel Code, which in many ways resembled the biblical Ten Commandments. The pre-Hispanic aborigines (Aetas, Indonesians and Malays) had myths and legends resembling the Old Testament stories of Adam and Eve, travels of Abraham and a host of nascent religious practices that would resemble early Christian rites in the New Testament church. Although their altars were replete with many wooden anitos (animistic icons), the aborigines believed in one Supreme Being (**Bathala**), who in many ways resemble the Almighty God (**Yahweh**) of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The linear Western view of history, however, cut through that process of evolution and so on March 17, 1521 the Philippines was "discovered" by Ferdinand Magellan. On March 31 of that year, the first Roman Catholic Mass was celebrated in the islet of Limasawa, Leyte ("**lima 'sawa**" which means five wives because the chieftain had five wives). According to Spanish historian, Pigaffeta, the chieftain of Leyte (Datu Humabon) his wives, and 800 members of his "**barangays**" (literally meaning boats; figuratively meaning households) were baptized into the Catholic faith. The baptism of the natives proved to be Magellan's last indelible and significant act. He was killed in an encounter with a hostile native, Chieftain Lapulapu, in the neighboring island of Mactan, Cebu. The Christianization of Leyte would however prove to mean the Catholicization of the whole Philippines.

Spanish colonization and the Catholic Church pervaded all aspects of Philippine colonial life. The country was divided into **haciendas** (villages), **pueblos** (towns) and **encomiendas** (provinces). These were allotted to Spanish civil and religious authorities as "spoils of war" or rewards for their role in the pacification



of a "heathen people." Both the **encomiendero** and the Spanish friars (Catholic religious orders or corporations) were empowered to govern the natives, collect taxes, convert them to the Catholic faith and protect them from the backlash of "paganism" and the attacks from Islam.

The Spanish civil and religious authorities later became abusive. They instituted forced labor and engaged in rapacious aggrandizement of feudal lands, sorely dividing Philippine society into two classes: the filthy rich and the miserably poor. Catholicism, instead of being an instrument of liberation became an agency of the colonial government in maintaining a structure of slavery, injustice and oppression.

Filipino generations that followed organized hundreds of revolts to throw off the Spanish yoke but superior Spanish military forces, aided by fragmented islands, negative regionalism and the colonial strategy of "divide and rule" would stamp out rebellions. Among these rebellions, were religious protests and demands for religious reformation.

The first religious protest movement occurred in Tayabas (Quezon Province) in 1841 when Apolinario dela Cruz and his religious brotherhood (**Confradia de San Jose**) asked the Catholic Church to recognize a budding Filipino religious order. The response of the Spanish friars was to have Dela Cruz arrested. Dela Cruz and his men were summarily executed with his body dismembered and paraded around the town ostensibly to serve notice that his idea of self-determination was not only unacceptable but also a heinous crime that deserved condemnation and death.

The second most significant religious protest was the "Secularization" movement championed by Fr. Pedro Pelaez, a Filipino **mestizo** (Spanish Filipino mix) in 1862-1863. The secularization was in effect a conflict between the Spanish religious orders (Augustinian, Dominican, Franciscans, Recollects and Jesuits) and the Filipino "secular" priests. The latter were advocating for an equitable representation in the administration of parishes in the country while the former were holding on to their entrenched positions. The crux of the matter was the

blatant racism of the Spanish friars against Filipino priests whom they considered to be ill-prepared and "belonging to an inferior race."

The great Pedro Pelaez died prematurely during the Manila earthquake in June 1863 but his example was followed by three priests: Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora. From secularization, the triumvirate steered the movement to "Filipinization." Fighting for "racial equality" and the recognition of the Filipino clergy, the three priests criticized openly the Spanish abuses and documented the ineptness and rapacity of the friars. As a result they were unjustly implicated in a mutiny that took place in a military arsenal in Cavite, an outskirt in Manila. On February 15, 1872 the most hated Spanish governor of colonial Philippines, General Rafael de Isquierdo sentenced the three nationalistic priests to death by garotte, a medieval form of strangling.

The Spanish authorities, by opting to publicly execute the three priests in such a horrible death had hoped that the spectacle would strike terror to the Filipinos. Ironically, it was the martyrdom of Gom-Bur-Za that inspired the national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal to aspire for liberation from Spain and to galvanize a reform movement that gave shape to the revolutionary party, the **Katipunan** (Filipino society).

Like his priest-predecessors, Rizal was also publicly executed (death by musketry) on December 30, 1896 but his revolutionary movement carried on the struggle until the fateful Philippine revolution of 1898 which put an end to over three centuries of Spanish tyrannical rule.

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## CHAPTER 5

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### *AMERICANIZATION AND THE PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENT CHURCH*

Philippine history has many twists and turns. Following the first Filipino Revolution in 1898, General Emilio Aguinaldo was proclaimed president of the "first Philippine Republic." A revolutionary government was organized, a Philippine constitution was framed, and Tagalog was approved as the national language. But just as they were on the deck towards self-determination, a new game was being played by the colonizers.

Unknown to Filipino revolutionaries, the Philippines was "ceded" by Spain to the United States to the tune of twenty million dollars. It was no wonder that the delapidated Spanish ships of Admiral Montojo came crashing down upon the first salvos of the American fleet led by Admiral John Dewey. Instead of waking up to the new dawn of freedom from Spain, the Filipinos had to live through the nightmare of adjusting to their new masters, the Americans. A brief but nevertheless cruel period of Philippine-American War ensued with horrendous loss to the Filipinos worn out by years of revolts and revolution.

It is in this context that the Philippine Independent Catholic Church was born. It is to be noted that the Filipino revolutionaries had two dreams; one, to achieve an independent nation enrolled in the family of free nations; second, to achieve an independent church enrolled in the family of world religions. With the coming of the American imperialism, the first goal was cut in the bud. The only sane thing to do was to proceed with the second goal---an independence from the Roman Catholic Church ruled by Spanish prelates.

The new religious revolution focused on the Filipinization of the Catholic Church. In October 23, 1899, the Rev. Gregorio Aglipay, a Roman Catholic priest identified as Military Vicar General of Emilio Aguinaldo led an assembly of Filipino clergy in Paniki, Tarlac to form a "provisional Constitution of the

Filipino Church." The document contained a de-facto proclamation of schism not necessarily from the Roman Catholic pope but from the control of the Spanish bishops in the Philippines.

Aglipay's bold move was meted with a decree of excommunication from Spanish Archbishop Nozaleda. Instead of capitulating, Aglipay countered with his own version of "excommunication" by isolating Nozaleda from the respect of the Filipino people. "The rift became irreconcilable and on August 3, 1902 Don Isabelo delos Reyes, founder of the first labor union in the Philippines proclaimed the "Philippine Independent Catholic Church" with Aglipay as the first Supreme Bishop.

The birth and spontaneous growth of the PICC would later pave the way for the "loosening" of the grip of Roman Catholicism in the Philippines. American Protestant churches, protected by the neo-colonial regime, mushroomed. An indigenous non-Catholic church, the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) was formed. While almost one-fourth of the entire Roman Catholics "defected" into the Philippine Independent Church, many others left the Roman churches and affiliated with Methodism, Presbyterianism, the United Church of Christ, the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* and other denominations. It was as if the PIC shook the tree and others joined in picking up the fruits. It took another decade of "counter reformation" measures before the Roman Catholic church regained its power and control of the Philippine religious situation.

It has to be noted that when the Philippine Independent Church separated from Rome it had no desire to abandon the Catholic dogmas and practices. The schism was made on the basis that there was no possibility of reform in the decadent Romanism that was intrinsic in the Philippine colonial church. The conditions obtaining following the schism made it difficult for Aglipay and Delos Reyes as leaders of the independent church to maintain a balance between vision and reality. Haunted by the spectre of being "enslaved again," they refused reconciliation with Rome even when the hated Spanish prelates were being replaced with more amiable ones. Suspicious of being "enslaved anew," they refused assistance from incoming American Protestant churches.

In 1906, the U.S. Supreme Court, deciding for its Philippine colony, ordered the Philippine Independent Church to "return all their real estate and property" to the Roman Catholic Church. Aglipay and Delos Reyes appealed the decision claiming that their churches, chapels and cemeteries were built by the blood, sweat and tears of the Filipino people and could not be claimed by the Pope of Rome but to no avail. In a short while, the PICC found themselves dispossessed of all facilities to hold their services. Their priests had to vacate their rectories. Their bereaved had nowhere to bury their dead.

The loss of the stone churches greatly demoralized the fledgling Church. Many members returned to the fold of Rome, some joined the Protestants, and others dropped out from Christianity completely. The majority however held on to their proud spirits and began to rethink and to rebuild. In some spontaneous way, they built churches from bamboo and palm leaves. Episcopal Bishop Lewis Whitemore had this to say about this indomitable spirit of the PICC:

*"It was humiliating to abandon the great churches where they and their parents had worshipped, and the wonder is not that so many abandoned the Independent Church but that so many stayed in it...these people tasted the gall and bitterness of defeat and humiliation. But they did not give up, whether because of native courage or something better. My own theory is that they felt, as no other group, identified with the Philippines and carried an ark of covenant with them in the wilderness. That covenant was with the heroes of the past who had seen visions of a fairer Philippines---and had suffered. They could not see the future but they knew something precious had been entrusted to them. Like Abraham, they ventured forth into the unknown. Confused and homeless, they started to rethink and to rebuild."*

For forty years thereafter, the Philippine Independent Church charted in what PICC Bishop Emerson Bonoan of Ilocos Norte called "theological wilderness." Handicapped by lack of material resources to train clergy and sustain growth and besieged by retaliatory attacks from the Roman Catholic Church, the PICC leaders wandered from one theological position to another.

Bishop Aglipay made a personal friendship with Governor Howard Taft and was influenced by the latter's ideas on Unitarianism. He was later to include Unitarian beliefs in his experimental liturgies. Don Isabelo delos Reyes, being a labor leader, was heavily dabbling with socialism and was injecting the PICC theology with Marxist dialectical materialism. Both Aglipay and Delos Reyes ran for political positions in a somewhat unpopular platform---autonomy from the Americans. While Delos Reyes was later elected senator, Aglipay lost in his bid for the presidency from the more popular (and U.S. backed) Manuel L. Quezon.

The result of the PICC leaders' theological wandering and political adventurism was a blurring of the Church's vision and mission. With a fatigued clergy and disoriented laity, factionalism reared its ugly head. The potential schismatic groups were only waiting for the death of the two leaders. The demise of the two founders (one after the other), were greatly exploited by the Roman Catholic propagandists. One daughter of Delos Reyes, a Catholic nun, hid the dying father in her convent and asked him to sign a letter retracting from his involvement in the PICC and "returning to the fold of Rome." Another propaganda attempted to besmirch the reputation of Aglipay by saying that he had fathered a child with Pilar Jamias whom he married moments before his death.

Following the death of Aglipay and Delos Reyes, the PICC found itself being dismembered by internal strifes and party spirits. Elections for the position of Supreme Bishop were marked with heavy politicking. The results were heavily contested. The period following World War II were years of endless court litigations involving factions in the PICC. No other church in Philippine history would have the same number of court cases involving bishops fighting among themselves.

The PICC theological and ecclesiastical sickness found its healing in 1948 when PICC Bishop Isabelo delos Reyes, Jr. (son of one of the founders) received the "gift of apostolic succession" from three bishops of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA). The consecration of Delos

Reyes, Jr. by duly recognized prelates from the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" enabled it to move forward and be restored into the Catholic mainstream. The Unitarian teachings of Aglipay and the gnostic literature of Don Isabelo were blotted out and removed from the new Filipino Missal. The Orthodox and old Catholic Churches in England and Europe readily acknowledged the PICC's return to Trinitarian orthodoxy.

In 1961, following spirited negotiations at the 60th General Convention of the ECUSA in Detroit, Michigan, the Concordat of Full Communion between the PICC and ECUSA was signed. Under this agreement, each Church recognizes the catholicity and independence of the other; agrees to admit members of the other to participate in the sacraments; and implies that each Church believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian faith. This unequivocal statement about the PICC's Trinitarian faith made it possible for members of the PICC to be recognized as Filipino Independent Catholics worldwide.

With the Concordat agreement in place, the PICC was admitted as member of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines, the World Council of Churches and the worldwide Anglican and catholic (universal) communion. The dream of the Filipino religious revolutionaries to have "an independent Filipino nation enrolled in the community of free nations" was not realized in their lifetime. Their other dream however, "to achieve an independent Filipino Church enrolled in the family of universal Christendom" became a reality.

Today, the Philippine Independent Church stands as the "only living and tangible result of the Philippine Revolution of 1898." The Concordat with the Episcopal Church has given it the necessary push to gain a special place in the worldwide Body of Christ. It has also added a new dimension to the religious and ecumenical relations between the Philippines and the United States which will have significant implications in future Filipino American mission.

## CHAPTER 6

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### *ELEMENTS OF FILIPINO AMERICAN THEOLOGY*

Theology (**theo** + **logus**; God + study) means literally "God talk." It means God talking to man and man talking to God. It is the articulation of man or woman about his or her understanding of God. It is our response to God's initiative of searching and finding us, like when God searched and found Adam hiding in the bushes and asking "where are you?" and Adam responding, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Genesis 2:9-10)

Most, if not all theologies, are contextual because a theology cannot exist in vacuum. A theology is a reflection of the theologian about the Word of God against the background of his or her situation. When Augustine wrote the twenty volumes of **The City of God**, he was reflecting about the burning city of Rome being besieged from all sides by pagan armies. In his reflection, he wrote the first ten volumes which speak about the "city of Man" which will "always die"; and the next ten volumes which speak about the "city of God" which will "never die."

In the context of Filipino Americans in the United States, the situations (context) have changed but the essential message (the text) remains. We are still in search of the City of God amidst the City of Man. The following are some elements in searching for a theology or spirituality that responds meaningfully to Filipino Americans and other immigrants in America.

#### **"THIRD WAVE" THEOLOGY**

Filipino American theology has something to say about finding the "third culture" in the context of a multicultural society. The dynamics start from "indigenous" Filipino cultural values (first culture) to "enculturated" American cultural values (second culture) to "contextualized" Filipino American cultural



values (third culture). If Filipinos in America insist on living in the first culture, they will forever find themselves strangers in a strange land. If they swing too much to the pendulum of imitating the dominant culture, they will forfeit their legacy and miss out on the opportunity to impact the American society with their peculiar cultural gifts. The key is finding the "right mix," that of creating the third culture which draws the good from two opposites.

"Third Wave" theology also relates to the struggle of the Third World Peoples (the poor of Asia, Africa and Latin America) living in the First World (the affluence of Europe and America). Up to what degree is their "culture shock?" How can we relate God's Word in the context of "institutional racism," social and economic injustice, and the quest for dialogue with people from other faiths, cultures and ideologies? Are the immigrants dwelling in tents like Abraham because they are searching for a city whose builder and maker is God? Or are they "no longer strangers and exiles" but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the City of God?

"Third Wave" theology seeks to find a meaningful reflection in the context of the "Third Wave" civilization: the clash between the agricultural era and the industrial era; the confusion of the "third wave" generation; and the struggle of the young people to find meaning in the context of an increasingly secular, and highly technological society. Where is God in the midst of extraordinary advances in science and technology? How is God needed in the midst of space explorations and personal computers; of artificial respirators and "virtual reality"; of "face lifts" and "lymposuctions"; of "nintendo" and "ninja turtles" etc.? Yes, "Third Wave" theology would begin by God raising the first question God posed to Adam: "where are you?"--- and we, making our response.

### **"PEOPLE POWER" THEOLOGY**

One of the contributions of the Filipino People to the world in the 20th century is the rediscovery of the fact that "the people are not objects but subjects of history." The phenomenal peaceful revolution in the Philippines in 1986 which brought down an entrenched dictatorship regime is a credit to the resiliency of the oppressed Filipinos to bring about change through non-violence.

Filipino American theology must bring back power to the people to change their destiny. Often, political and religious leaders of the dominant American culture tend to be paternalistic and condescending. This is a subtle form of racism. It generates dependency. It deadens creativity.

Grassroots "people's movements"; ethnic peoples being organized to work for social justice, economic liberation, religious freedom, racial equality and multicultural harmony are "points of lights" in a broken world. Peoples in the global village are searching for a new spirituality that will end their fragmented isolation. While they struggle to maintain or regain their ethnic identity, they always see it in the context of mutual responsibility and interdependence because "people power" theology draws its basic power from the Gospel which is for all people.

The Philippine Revolutions of 1898 (which ended Spanish colonial rule) and the Philippine Revolution of 1985 (which ended Marcos dictatorship) were all related in one respect: they had political and religious overtones. "People Power" theology draws the people closer to God and to other people. From Philippines, "people power" movements emerged in Korea, in China, in Europe and Russia---breaking down the dividing wall of Germany, dismantling communism and restoring democracy, nationalism and religious liberties.

"People power" theology will set free Filipino Americans and other immigrant communities to contribute creatively to the harmony of peoples and races in the global village. The Gospel of Christ being reflected in Filipino American "people's movements" is a liberating force that ultimately contributes to the solidarity of all peoples in obedience to their common Lord.

## **THEOLOGY OF VERSATILITY**

The early Filipino Americans who settled in Louisiana in the 1700's were called "shrimp people." Like the "milkfish in brackish water", the shrimps are versatile in that they could swim in the water as well as crawl on the mud.

Filipino American theology, if it seeks to be relevant to the changing situations, must have the element of versatility. When the Great Depression of the

1930's became too unbearable to the people, the Filipino farm workers in the United States planted their own crops of potatoes for survival rather than depending on the much-contested welfare checks. While others were complaining about the recession in the '70's and '80's, many Filipinos were having "double jobs," meaning settling for any menial job that can be found, rather than waiting for the "right job."

This quality of resiliency and versatility is owed by Filipino Americans to their own history of hardship. Colonized by Spain for over 300 years and by America for 50 years, Filipinos combined the "convent mentality" and "Hollywood values." Tyrannized by Japanese invasion for four years (1940-1944) and ruled by Filipino martial law and dictatorship for thirteen years (1972-1985), Filipinos carry with them scars of suffering, the marks of Christ.

Sustained by faith in God in the midst of human frailties, the Philippines was reckoned in history as the "only Christian nation in Asia." God has not chosen Indonesia with its Borubudor, nor India with its Taj Majal, nor China with its grandeur nor Japan with its imperial majesty. Instead, God has chosen the tiny spratley islands of the Philippines to transport and plant the seeds of Christianity in the Far East in 1521. Perhaps it was a response to the visit of the Magi, perhaps it was just an "accident." Nevertheless, it was a history fraught with images of the history of Israel, the "chosen people" of God. God in all wisdom, has revealed the Son in the history of the Filipino People.

The "theology of versatility" draws its inspiration from this journey of God's people in history. Like Israel or the Hebrews, the Filipino Americans are in their spiritual journey. As they interact with peoples of other lands, they adjust their beliefs in an endless process of accomodation and prophetism. Christianity, like the faith of the Hebrews, is a living faith. It has ever constant principles as well as versatility to adjust to new situations.

The images of a diamond with many facets, an "intercultural Church" amidst the multicultural community, a Christian ministry in dialogue with other faiths and cultures---are some of the forms that are shaped by the "theology of versatility"---an authentic Filipino American theological reflection.

## SECTION THREE

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### *FILIPINO AMERICAN MINISTRY* *(FOCUS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY)*

Santa Clara County is the third largest county in California and the thirteenth in the United States. There are fifteen cities (Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, and Sunnyvale). San Jose is the largest city; Monte Sereno is the smallest; and Milpitas is the youngest.

If America is the microcosm of the world and California the microcosm of the United States, then Santa Clara County is the microcosm of California. Santa Clara County typifies the three great revolutions going on in California: the demographic revolution, technological revolution and religious-cultural revolution.

Over the past two decades (1970 - 1990), Santa Clara County underwent tremendous changes in population. Favorable climatic conditions, job opportunities and relatively affordable housing have magnetized people from many places to converge and to choose Santa Clara County as their home. Most notable in this influx are immigrants from Hispanic and Asian countries.

The 1980's was the most pivotal years for Santa Clara County demographics. Over 70,000 new Asian immigrants have arrived and stayed. Filipinos, Vietnamese, Chinese, Asian Indians, Koreans, Japanese, Laotians, Cambodians and Hmongs have swelled the burgeoning clusters of Asian communities. Tens of thousands more have followed well-traveled roads from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and other Hispanic countries. By 1990, the rising tide of Asian and Hispanic peoples have radically altered the racial composition of the County. The Anglo/European community has ceased to be the majority. As a matter of fact, there is no longer any ethnic majority. By the year 2000, it is expected that the Anglo community will find themselves in the reversed minority status.

Being the home of "Silicon Valley," Santa Clara County also exemplifies the

future of American society. Alvin Toffler, in his book **The Third Wave** wrote about this "confused stage of human civilization" where the "first wave" (agricultural era) and the "second wave" (industrial era) clash against each other. This Third Wave era (also called "computer age" or "post-industrial, post-modern age") is one that is marked by extraordinary technological progress and rapid urban growth as well as the renaissance of traditions. It is an era of cultural creativity as well as massive cultural shock.

In the "Third Wave civilization," there is a clash as well as merging of the simple and the complex, the pastoral and the hysteria, the village and the city. The advent of cellular phones, personal computers and other affordable electronics merge with the revitalization of immigrant cultural traditions. It is amazing to find Laotians doing their traditional folk dance along with the rap music of their second generations.

Aside from being a demographic and technological phenomenon, Santa Clara County is also a unique missionary field. According to a recent survey done by an evangelical group, both Catholic and Protestant churches have a total membership of only 13.8% of the 1.5 million population. Churches in the County which are predominantly Anglos are declining both in membership as well as in churches. Over 44% of the Protestant churches reported loss of members. Another 20% reported no growth at all. Most of those reported "church growth" are by transfer and not conversion.

Today, there are more Buddhists than Episcopalians or Presbyterians in the county. There are certainly more people watching football on Sundays than there are people worshipping in the churches. The apparent lack of Christian progress and the resultant stress among churches make one pastor to comment that the Santa Clara County is "the graveyard of missionaries."

Amidst this context, what is the shape of Filipino American ministry in Santa Clara County? What are the implications of this demographic, technological and religious-cultural revolution to Filipino American Ministry? How does the gospel speak to the Filipino American? How can the Filipino American Church impact the lives of their fellow immigrants and the dominant society in which they find themselves?

## CHAPTER 7

### *THE FILIPINO MINISTRY PROBE*

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In 1987, the Presbytery of San Jose conducted a probe to determine the needs of the Filipino American community and to develop a programmatic response to these needs. Included in this study was a demographic profile and the areas of unmet needs as well as the needs currently being met by several agencies as well as churches in Santa Clara County. The Probe staff also conducted a Survey of over one thousand Filipinos representing heads of households, mainly husband or father of the family.

The following is the result of the survey and an updated demographic profile of Filipinos in Santa Clara County.

#### **Demographic Data**

Although Filipinos are the largest Asian ethnic group in California (comprising about 26% of all Asians), they are only close second to the Chinese in Santa Clara County. The 1990 Census revealed that there are 261,468 Asians in the County. Of these, 25% or 61,518 are Filipinos; 26% or 65,027 are Chinese; 21% or 54,212 are Vietnamese; 10% or 26,516 are Japanese; 6% or 15,565 are Koreans; and 9% or 20,164 are Asian Indians.

Although they were not included in this initial Census report, it is estimated that both the Cambodians and the Laotians in Santa Clara County would number a combined total of 10,000. It is the estimate of many Asian American groups, especially the Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI) that the Asian population in the County would be over a quarter of a million for 1990.

**TABLE 1.**

**1990 Population Totals for Selected Asian Groups in Santa Clara  
County and Percentage Distribution by Cities (Source - 1990 Census)**

City	All	Vietnamese		Chinese		Japanese		Filipino		Korean		Asian Indian	
	Asians	1990	%	1990	%	1990	%	1990	%	1990	%	1990	%
Campbell	3,419	666	21.0	728	22.00	769	24.0	334	11.0	407	13.0	268	9.0
Cupertino	9,226	260	3.0	5,245	57.0	1,801	20.0	315	4.0	709	8.0	700	8.0
Gilroy	1,263	34	3.0	200	18.0	395	33.0	408	33.0	57	5.0	42	5.0
Los Altos	2,642	26	1.0	1,404	53.0	601	24.0	115	5.0	231	10.0	171	7.0
Los Altos Hills	1,163	10	1.0	728	64.0	128	11.0	47	5.0	112	10.0	109	9.0
Los Gatos	1,380	76	7.0	480	37.0	319	24.0	138	11.0	138	11.0	131	10.0
Milpitas	17,572	3,717	22.0	3,965	24.0	556	3.0	6,156	37.0	626	5.0	1,343	9.0
Monte Sereno	320	18	6.0	155	49.0	58	19.0	25	9.0	18	6.0	30	11.0
Morgan Hill	1,271	83	9.0	279	23.0	321	27.0	244	20.0	77	7.0	132	11.0
Mountain View	9,932	871	9.0	2,681	27.0	1,669	18.0	3,011	31.1	472	6.0	746	9.0
Palo Alto	5,835	87	2.0	2,897	52.0	1,302	23.0	430	8.0	358	7.0	417	8.0
San Jose	152,815	41,303	27.0	31,112	24.0	11,794	8.0	38,169	26.0	7,207	6.0	10,672	9.0
Santa Clara	17,416	3,396	19.0	2,663	11.0	1,670	11.0	4,970	30.0	1,639	11.0	2,118	13.0
Saratoga	4,215	129	3.0	2,500	59.0	642	15.0	138	3.0	329	9.0	343	8.0
Sunnyvale	22,655	2,664	12.0	6,548	29.0	2,840	13.0	5,597	26.0	1,690	18.0	2,091	10.0
County Total	261,468	54,212	21.0	65,027	26.0	26,516	10.0	61,518	25.0	15,565	6.0	20,164	9.0

The highest concentration of Filipinos in Santa Clara County is in the following cities: Milpitas (6,156), Mountain View (3,011), San Jose (38,169), Santa Clara (4,970), and Sunnyvale (5,597). This pattern of Filipino movement into clusters of neighborhood started in the 70's when large numbers moved to the County from neighboring counties (particularly San Francisco, Alameda and Los Angeles) due to the job attraction of Silicon Valley. In San Jose, the majority of Filipino households are found in Berryessa/North Valley, downtown San Jose, East San Jose and the Evergreen valley.

## **Socio-economic Profile**

Sociologically, there are more females than males in the Filipino community of Santa Clara County. Heads of households are mostly in their prime productive age (between 31-50 years old). More than two-thirds of the Filipino residents were born in the Philippines, reflecting the young immigrant nature of the community. The great majority come from Luzon and Visayan provinces, speak mostly Tagalog, Ilocano or Visayan at home. It is interesting to note that in talking to their second generation and in writing letters to the Philippines, many of them use English rather than their particular dialect.

Ninety percent of the heads of households were married to a Filipino spouse; 53% of married couples have one to two children, while 27% have three to five children. There is an even distribution of the ages of Filipino children (from one to twenty-one years old). Majority of the respondent families have been in the County only during the last ten years or so; only 32% have been in the County for over eleven years. Majority (76%) have chosen California as their first choice prior to coming to the United States. Of those who come from secondary migrations (from other states), majority came from Hawaii and New York.

Filipinos in Santa Clara County are highly educated. Seventy-seven percent are college graduates or have attended colleges; 20% are high school graduates. The rest have at least attended schools. An overwhelming majority are English literate. Most of them are better in written than in spoken English. They feel shy with their heavy (Ilocano, Tagalog or Visayan) accent.

Economically, 22% of the respondents earn a combined household income of \$20,000 - \$35,000; 32% earns from 35,000 - \$50,000; and 37% earns over \$50,000. These incomes have to be correlated to the fact that in an average Filipino household, there are at least two to three persons working.

Reflecting the job opportunities in Silicon Valley, 36% of the Filipinos work in electronics assembly and clerical jobs; 23% in service-providing jobs; and 13% in professional fields. Only 6% are self-employed or are engaged in entrepreneurship.



Filipinos in Santa Clara County are generally hardworking. Only 17% work from 15 - 34 hours per week while 57% work from 35 - 44 hours per week and 26% from 45 - 60 hours per week. 63% work at day shift; 17% at swing shift; and 10% at graveyard shift. Of those working, 26% work even on Sundays.

Majority of Filipino families (54%) own their homes ; 33% rent apartments; and 11% live with their relatives. It is not unusual to find a 5-bedroom house with at least three families. A great majority (85%) have their own cars indicating their desire for mobility as well as the inadequate public transportation in Santa Clara County.

As far as their religious backgrounds is concerned, majority of the Filipinos (65%) claimed to have Roman Catholic background; 12% claimed to have Protestant (including Iglesia Ni Cristo) backgrounds; 7% Aglipayans (Independent Catholics); and 6% claimed no active religious affiliations even back in the Philippines.

While a great majority of Christians (both Catholic and Protestants) were active churchgoers in the Philippines, only 47% are attending a church in Santa Clara County. Majority (52%) are "unchurched." While Filipino churchgoing activity is much better than the over-all Santa Clara County record (only 13.8% of the total SC population go to church), this is indeed an evidence that Christian commitment decreases as immigrants battle with the pressures of a materialistic work-oriented society.

Despite their low attendance at Sunday masses or services, however, it is interesting to note that majority of Filipino Americans still consider the church (or clergy) as one of the agencies or institutions they could trust. When asked whom would they first notify should they are in need of urgent assistance, the respondents answered in the following order of priorities: family, close friend, priest, concerned government agency and Filipino association.

Speaking of Filipino voluntary associations, while there are hundreds of associations in Santa Clara County, only 26% are actively involved in them. A whopping 74% are not active in any Filipino associations. This indicate the low level of political empowerment and lack of community solidarity as far as

Filipino organizing is concerned. This also indicates the general lack of trust among Filipinos about the political process. Political associations have negative connotations in the Philippines and sadly enough this consciousness is carried in the way in which Filipino Americans relate among themselves. Political infighting and distrust are prevalent in many Filipino organizations. This especially highlighted when two Filipino Americans, representing two opposing factions of the Filipino community have locked horns in competing for the same position in the City Council of San Jose in 1992.

### **IDENTIFYING FELT-NEEDS OF FILIPINO AMERICANS**

The following are the multi-dimensional problems identified by the Filipino Ministry Probe in Santa Clara County:

**(a) Unemployment** as "lay offs" continue in the Silicon Valley industry. Underemployment resulting from the apparent discriminatory hiring practices and American licensing processes. Workers in private and government agencies complain of a "glass ceiling" when it comes to promotion. There are many well-qualified Filipinos working in the San Jose City and Santa Clara County offices but not one is in the upper management level.

**(b) Physical, mental and general health problems** resulting from overwork and irregular workshifts. People working in electronics assembly line often complain of nausea and recurring migraine headaches. Many Filipinos do not have adequate health care and insurance benefits.

**(c) Problems in education.** Filipino students are among those greatly affected by the cut in the Education budget of California. Many children of new immigrants still suffer from "culture shock." As mentioned earlier, there is a high rate of school drop-outs, teenage pregnancy, gang activities, and very recently AIDS cases, among Filipinos.

**(d) Overcrowded housing** resulting from inadequate financial resources and the increasing cost of homeownership. It is not uncommon to find a three-bedroom house occupied by two to three extended families.

**(e) Marriage and family dysfunctions** resulting from generation gaps and lack of intra-family communications. Where in the Philippines only the father works and the mother takes care of the children, now the Filipino family finds both parents work. Parental guidance is nil and children find themselves at the mercy of peer groups. There is an increase in Filipino divorces, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse in the families not to mention emotional abuse.

**(f) Poverty, joblessness and bankruptcies** owing to the current recession, inter-Filipino business rivalry, inadequate business networks and insufficient research on the job opportunity market.

**(g) Problems in child care and assistance to senior citizens.** Some young couples tend to solve the problem by exploiting their aging parents to serve as their "baby sitters."

**(h) Social services left unmet** due to unfamiliarity or distrust in government agencies. As revealed in the Survey, Filipinos in need come to government agencies only as a "last resort." There is also a perception among Filipinos that to receive welfare assistance from the government is tantamount to pauperism or beggary.

**(i) Lack of political clout and self-determination** as Filipinos found themselves in the periphery of the political process. The lack of a "Filipino Center" due to their community dispersal in Santa Clara County and their natural tendency to regionalize and factionalize make Filipinos unable to assert themselves as a community.

**(j) Marginal status in mainline churches.** In the Roman Catholic diocese of San Jose, only one Filipino priest serves as pastor. The rest are only assistant priests. The Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real has one Filipino priest (an Aglipayan or Independent Catholic) serving as Asian Missioner. The United Methodist Church and the Seventh-Day Adventist have one full-time pastor each and the United Church of Christ and the Baptists Church have at least two Filipino pastors each. There is no Filipino Presbyterian pastor. Of the Filipino non-Catholic churches, only the indigenous **Iglesia Ni Cristo** has a membership beyond five hundred.

## SHAPE OF FILIPINO AMERICAN MINISTRY

The Filipino Ministry Probe is probably one of the most comprehensive surveys ever done by a religious group. In one of their interviews, the Probe staff discovered that Filipinos in Santa Clara County have diverse ideas on the shape of a Filipino American Church. The new immigrants prefer a "Church primarily of, by and for Filipinos." Those who have stayed a little longer prefer a "Church of all races." Those who have experienced working with a certain racial group would prefer a "bicultural Church," (e.g. Filipino and Anglo, Filipino and Asians, Filipino and Hispanic, Filipino and Blacks).

When asked what kind of programs and issues they feel the Filipino American Church should address, the respondents listed the following priorities:

1. Worship and Prayer (masses, eucharists, prayer meetings)
2. Socials and Fellowship (where they could meet new friends)
3. Family Ministries (parenting, marriage counselling, children school)
4. Social Action (immigration assistance, help to homeless)
5. Outreach to Philippines (aid to typhoon and earthquake victims)
6. Preaching and Teaching (Bible studies and good sermons)
7. Support groups (youth fellowship, seniors fellowship, womens group)
8. Economic development (church assisting in job referrals)
9. Healing ministry (especially charismatic ministries)
10. Choir and other musical programs

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## CHAPTER 8

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### EVANGELIZING FILIPINO AMERICANS

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To effectively evangelize the Filipino Americans, one has to start from where they are in order to make the Christian message meaningful to them. One must begin with the understanding of their history, their culture and traditions, their basic needs and the ultimate need for a deeper relationship with God.

Although the Filipino People have journeyed for over 400 years in Christian history, they have not been able to develop a faith that is rooted in the biblical Christ. Their knowledge of God was gained from an intermixture of Catholic rituals, "folk Christianity," and cultural adaptation of the biblical passion narratives. In Filipino psyche, faith and culture are inextricably intertwined. They can never be separated. In his book, **Christ in Filipino Context**, Douglas J. Elwood quoted a Filipino sociologist, Jaime Bulatao, S.J. describing the Filipino "cultural Christ" in two paradigms --- **Santo Intiero** (crucified Christ) and **Santo Nino** (child Christ). Bulatao said:

*"The Christ of the Filipinos is pre-eminently a suffering Christ. He is beaten, scourged, humiliated, and defeated Christ. With Christ under this aspect, the people of the Philippines (particularly the men) readily identify themselves...The favorite image of Christ appear to be those representing some aspects of His passion, such as carrying the cross or being scourged at the pillar."*

*"The other face of Christ which is very popular among Filipinos is the Santo Nino (Holy Child or Infant Jesus). Deep in the Filipino heart is a Baby symbol, a child attached to parental and family relationship from cradle to the grave. Warm, loving, friendly, lovable, trusting, defenseless and vulnerable are some of the qualities that the Holy Child evoke. There is a "Baby" in every Filipino. That is why, Christ must remain an infant if only to empathize with the Baby in them.*

One must hasten to add that these images of Christ were highlighted by the Spanish missionaries in the colonial era and used as a form of cultural im-

perialism. With the Santo Nino, it is as if Christ was born but did never grew to be a man. The preaching, healing and prophetic ministries of Jesus of Nazareth were largely ignored. With the Santo Intierro (crucified and dead Christ), it is as if the Messiah never rose again. He has not triumphed over evil, sin and death. As a Spanish mystic, Don Miguel de Unamuno self-critically said: "*Este Cristo en mi tierra is tierra!*" (This Christ of my earth is earth!)

Needless to say, the challenge of Filipino evangelization is the presentation of the "wholistic gospel" to the grassroots community and to proclaim the liberating message of the Resurrection. "*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!*" The **kerygma** (total Christ Event) needs to be injected into the religious-cultural journey of the Filipino people. Amidst their daily experience of poverty and destitution, of natural calamities and man-made disasters, of human frailties and corruption, of "bad luck" and seemingly-uncontrollable events, the liberating message of the Resurrection needs to ring through. That they can rise from the grave, that they can rise and finally triumph against all odds, that they can overturn fate, that they can soar like eagles, that they can transform their world. That they can rise from poverty to prosperity, from mediocrity to greatness, from survival to renewal, from despair to hope, from the grim image of hopelessness to a shining vision of a new, full, abundant and overflowing life ---that is the challenge of Filipino evangelism.

## EVANGELISTIC GOAL

In the classic understanding of the Christian mandates, the Church should be an instrument of God in preaching the gospel. The emphasis of the biblical account in Matthew is summed up in its ending where Jesus met with his faithful disciples after the Resurrection and said: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I will be with you even unto the close of the age.*" (Matthew 28:18-20)

The emphasis in Matthew is the total preaching of the gospel in such a way

that people will make an informed decision to accept or reject the claims of Christ. In Mark's gospel, the narrative ended with Jesus rebuking the eleven disciples for their lack of faith and giving them the command to "*go into the world and preach the good news.*" Accompanying this mandate is the promise that their preaching will be accompanied with "*signs and wonders.*" (Mark 16:14-18)

For its part, Luke's gospel emphasized that the preaching, healing and deliverance ministry of Jesus are a process of restoring human wholeness: body, mind and spirit. John's gospel, similarly talked about the new and abundant life offered by the Good Shepherd "here and now" as well as everlasting life in the "world to come."

The goal of evangelism, then, is two-fold: to set free the oppressed and to save those who are lost. In Scriptures, Christ had compassion to the "**ochlos**, the poor, huddled, tired, disorganized masses ( **masa perditiones**) because they are "harrassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). The liberating message of Christ to the Filipino American "**ochlos**" is that they may have a sense of meaning and direction. The sick will be healed and the poor will have Good News preached to them.

In Scripture, God has also "commanded all people everywhere"(Acts 17) to repent. The message of Christ to the "**ethne**" (the tribes and the nations) is that they may be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth. No longer are they to be tossed to and fro by false philosophy, false teaching and false prophets. There is a Truth beyond all truths, an Ultimate Reality beyond all realities. The "nations of the world " shall become the "Nation of the Lord" and of Christ forever. Peoples from all tribes, and tongues and languages shall dwell in peace with God and the whole humanity, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more fighting, no death or pain for the old order will pass away and the new will come. "**Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!**"(Revelation 22)

## THE EVANGELISTIC SETTING

A study on a typical Filipino urban setting was made by a Filipino priest, Fr. Ben Villote of MetroManila. His findings showed that the people in his com-

munity could be classified as follows: (a) members of the Church organizations; (b) regular churchgoers who are not members of any church organization; and (c) non-church goers or very irregular church-goers.

To "members of Church organizations," (the First Group) Villote said, "Jesus Christ is their Lord whom they have to serve. Theirs is a **"functional approach"** to the Christian faith. To get a job done for their Lord, they have to organize and engage in some tangible projects. Organization for them means having a Constitution and By-laws to govern their groups and committees to decide and implement their activities. They are activity-conscious, project-centered and task-oriented. Social status or being recognized by the priest or church authority plays an important role for this group, which incidentally, makes up only 1% of the total parish membership.

"Regular churchgoers who are not members of any Church organizations" (the Second Group), have a **"cathartic approach"** to Christ. Christ is the one who makes them feel good and nice inside. They relate to the Christian faith on their own through the various forms of pious and devotional ceremonies which they regard as sources of blessings. They go to Sunday Masses for any or all of these reasons; (a) it is traditional practice for family to go to Mass, (b) it is an auspicious social occasion to sport a new dress, (c) it is the only and best occasion to socialize with friends and catch up with the latest gossip or news, (d) the sermons or homilies make them feel good and provide them with spiritual comfort in their time of sorrow, loneliness or problems. This group, according to Villote, makes up 10% of the parish population.

The "non-church goers or very irregular churchgoers" (the Third Group) have an **"environmental approach"** to Christ. Jesus is Someone they meet in the various indigenous grassroots neighborhood meetings: fiesta, novenas, marriage, baptism, house blessings, etc.. To this group, Christ may be vague, unarticulated image but nonetheless real. They feel Christ's "presence" among them and they may sometimes profess to be better than what they may criticize as the "hypocritical" first group. They however see no reason for regularly going to Church nor getting actively involved in its organizations. Some critics call this



group, "KBL Christians" (i.e., **Kasal, Binyag Libing** or **Wedding, Baptism, Funeral**) and they compose 89% of the parish population or community.

Needless to say, Filipino immigrants in the United States bring with them this religious cultural baggage. Aside from the fact of the predominance of the Third Group, the secularized, work-oriented American society that they found takes the First and Second Groups backward thus making a Fourth Group---"those who have dropped out of Christian services completely. " This group care not a hoot about religious festivities, let alone attending Sunday masses. Like the majority of mainline Americans, they spend their weekend at work or watching football, movies, picnic or catching up with laundry and groceries. Sometimes, they may watch evangelists on TV but more on its entertainment value than spiritual growth.

This regressive Christian climate in the Filipino American community is compounded by the fact that there are but few Filipino clergy or missionaries working in America and none or very few Filipino churches. Upon arriving in the United States, Filipino worshippers experience a religious cultural shock. As they go to attend an American Church, they discover that Sunday eucharists and weekday Bible Studies are the only celebrations they can take part of. These activities, however, are oftentimes not meaningful nor relevant to them because there is no connection with the Filipino culture. Homilies and sermon-styles cater mainly to Anglo or European faithful. Images, illustrations and jokes are sometimes understood only by the White folks. The oftentimes formal and orderly setting of the church fixtures, the almost mechanical rites and liturgy and the structured fellowships that follow are almost too artificial and lack the warmth and hospitality of a church in the Philippines.

Even if they wish to get fully involved in the American Church, most Filipino Americans found themselves marginalized. They remain unknown to the pastor and to the other people who fill up the pews on Sundays. Church buildings are open only at certain times of the day and business hours are observed by the priests and pastoral staff. Most of the churches, they found, out, are composed of elderly White citizens. There are no ministries that deal with the concerns of new immigrants, young couples, teenagers, and parents

with small children . Worst of all, Filipinos find no place for their indigenous devotions.

Another area of religious culture shock for Filipino Americans concerns the strict observance of membership register in the parishes. In the very fluid nature of new immigration and the unpredictability of their job and income situations, they are asked to fill-up membership forms and pledge envelopes as the sign of their Church belonging. Especially to those who grew up in rural Philippines where the priest receives directly from the "sacramental fee" system, they could not understand why they have to pledge year after year. They are also afraid that with the use of envelopes, their pastor will know that they only give a dollar to the collection basket and would think less of them. In view of their unpredictable job and housing situations, they also fear that they could not comply with their annual pledge. Thus, rather than pledging today and losing face tomorrow, they shy away from Church involvement and prefer to give anonymously continuing their "dollar-dollar" habit of supporting the parish. By doing so, they also relegate themselves to a slow process of finally dropping off from Christian ministry.

## **EVANGELISTIC STRATEGIES**

Majority of Filipino Americans we talked with, do not want to be assimilated or melted into the dominant Anglo Christian culture. For a people who had long been subject to foreign domination, they find assimilation to be another form of colonial oppression or cultural imperialism. Having re-discovered their rich cultural and Christian heritage, they want to be accepted as they are and be helped to grow with the community of other believers. Yet, they do not want the dominant culture to ignore or disregard their roots. Rather, they want to share their Christian cultural uniqueness in the context of intercultural diversity.

The following are some strategies that meet this need for a contextualized Filipino American evangelism:

### **(1) Cultural Renaissance**

The Filipinos love of drama and pageantry is seen in the "folk Christianity." The problem is not that it is devoid of doctrinal value as it is the lack of a fitting climax. In folk pageantry, the climax is not resurrection but crucifixion. This paradigm (symbol) is often repeated in Filipino movies, stage plays and skits. The hero or heroine dies and we are left without a Savior and without hope.

Often this unfitting climax to the Christian story is underscored in the way in which Filipinos venerate their own martyrs. Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Gom-Bur-Za, Ninoy Aquino, etc. gathered following only when they were dead. It is as if they were not believed while alive. What follows after their death therefore is a distortion of their memory and an incongruent application of their principles. People are left with the question: "what if these martyrs were alive?" The answer is that when they were alive, nothing happened. Now that they are dead, something ought to happen but who will do it?

In Santa Clara County, cultural renaissance is seen in the ecumenical celebrations held annually by the Filipino American Council. An ecumenical prayer is held to commemorate the Philippine Independence Day (June 12) or the Philippine American Friendship Day (July 4) involving all the Filipino American churches and religious groups. In these celebrations, leaders of various organizations pray together, with choirs participating from various churches.

### **2. Religious revival**

Evangelism needs to stretch the cultural symbols to the limit and steer them towards a faithful meeting with the biblical texts. The chalice of "folk Christianity" must come alive with the new wine of the biblical texts. Cultural drama and rituals must come alive with the augmentation of a fitting climax. In a sense, we need a re-invention or engineering of Filipino culture to reflect faith in place of doubt, to reflect hope in place of despair, to reflect life in place of death. The examples of "folk Christianity" that need cultural engineering are:

(a) The **"Misa de Gallo"** (dawn masses) of the Christmas season and the "novenas" (vigil prayers) prior to the the feasts of the Holy Child, the Virgin Mary and all the saints. These religious celebrations have served many purposes, among them were family togetherness and socializing among the neighbors. The **Misa de Gallo** and **novenas** (vigil services) can be used for an "episodic" study of the Bible and workshops involving family ministries.

(b) The **pasyon** (chanting of the Passion narratives) of the Lenten Season involve members of the community taking turns in hosting the event, with refreshment and meals for everyone. This can be used to conduct a teaching and sharing of human concerns for the socio-economic needs of the community.

(c) The **"penitencia"** (Lenten penitential acts) which sometimes involved self-flagellations. This can be transformed to a community project that involves self-denial and self-sacrifice, such as serving the homeless and the needy.

(d) The **"Salubong"** or re-enactment of the meeting between the Virgin Mary and the resurrected Christ. As in the Philippines, the service begins with two processions (Christ and the male group from one direction; Mary and the female group in another) and ends with an "encounter." In intercultural churches, an experimentation can be done involving processions of diverse racial groups.

(e) **Pista Ng Patay** (Feast of the Dead) which is celebrated on All Saints Day. This event brings people and families together at the cemetery where they spend considerable length of time, sometimes the whole day, praying and having picnics (feasting!) on the graveyard of their departed loved ones. In Filipino American context, this can be adapted by encouraging Filipinos to build "family altars" in their homes and can be an alternative to the oftentimes too secular "Halloween" parties of the mainline American culture.

Folk Christianity in the Philippines is like Christ incarnate and touches the heart and soul as no abstract text of theology can do. Only when the Church understands where Filipino Americans are coming from can meaningful evangelization take place. Contextual evangelism should always ask the questions:

- (1) What is the inner core of the Filipino Folk Christianity and how do we make it alive in the context of Filipino Americans?
- (2) What are the indigenous and traditional religious devotions of the Filipinos that can be purified of the elements of superstition and fatalism and made to bear the authentic and biblical doctrines that would lead Filipino Americans to the fullness and stature of Christ?
- (3) How can the popular religious festivals at Easter, Christmas and cultural fiestas be made up-to-date (**aggiornamento**) with the socio-economic needs and situations of the community in such a way that they engender love, charity, harmony, growth, cooperation and mutual responsibility within and outside the Filipino American community?
- (4) How can the evangelization of the Filipino Americans be contagious to the evangelization of other immigrant groups in the United States as well as all those who are in the fringes of the Christian church?



## CHAPTER 9

### CHURCH GROWTH FILIPINO AMERICAN STYLE

*In June 1881, the first period of Western Christian mission on the famous island of Bali, Indonesia came to a sudden and tragic end: J. de Vroom, the missionary was murdered by two servants. During the fifteen years after the arrival of the first missionaries, only one Balinese had been baptized. And now the inquiry into the murder showed that it was that one convert, Gusti Wajan Karangasem, who was the main author of the murder. Soon after his baptism, Karangasem was expelled by his village-community. He had to flee and live the awful life of an outlaw. The stress of that life became too strong for him, and he decided on the death of the one who had brought him into utter isolation. (From the accounts of Hans-Ruedi Weber, World Council of Churches)*

This negative example has given missionaries a lesson in history as far as Church Growth is concerned. Lesson one, the church does not grow chiefly by individuals but by groups; lesson two, the Christian person grows into the fullness of Christ mainly by sharing a newfound life in the context of a group.

Donald Mac Gavran, an acknowledged Church Growth expert, showed us in his most stimulating book, **The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions** (1955) that Western individualism tends to obscure group processes. How do people become Christians? By personal decision! Yes, but there is also a social factor which plays its important role before, during and after the personal decision. *"People become Christians as a wave of decision for Christ, sweeps through the group mind, involving many individual decisions but being far more than merely their sum,"* Mac Gavran said. In the New Testament churches, none of the early Christians grow in isolation from the *oikos* (entire households) who have become part of the community of believers.

In Philippine history, what is perhaps unique is that Christianization happened as a group process (one **Barangay** after another) and it happened over a long period of time. Notwithstanding its many negative aspects (especially

the Spanish colonization), Catholicization of the Philippines during the Spanish era had shown a great significance of group dynamics for the growth of the Church. Rather than rejecting the already existing work-and-living relationships in the community, Spanish missionaries used these structures to build up the Christian community. Rather than belaboring to convert the individuals (as modern day evangelists are doing), the Spanish missionaries converted the whole extended family starting from the hierarchical **datu** (chieftain) down to the last line of the indigenous society. The preaching of the Gospel did not create groups, but rather transformed existing groups into ecclesial communities. In other words, instead of creating a parish out of the individual Christians in the Barangay, the missionaries transformed the Barangays into parishes.

While this type of type of "gathered Christianization" may no longer be popular in the context of a highly secular society obsessed by the ideas and ideals of individual rights and self-esteem, the principles remain that the Church is not only a **kerygma** (message), not only a **diakonia** (service) but also a **koinonia** (fellowship). If that is the case, and if the Church needs to grow, then the Church should not only address its message to the conversion of secular individuals in society, but must also transform secular societies into Christian communities. Not only does the Church **should say** something, not only that the Church **should do** something but also that the Church **should be** something.

As a matter of fact, the Church is something. The church is community of believers, a fellowship of the Holy Spirit, a congregation of the redeemed and redeeming saints. In this connection, it is important to understand the sociology of Church growth. For unless the Church is able to rightly discern the emerging new patterns of group life and goes within and through that pattern, then the "fellowship of the Spirit", the Church will become a museum piece. If the Church has to come alive in the Filipino American community, it must seek to build "**koinonia**" (Christian fellowships) in the already existing structures, namely the various Filipino associations, community groups and extended immigrant families and clans. It must seek to develop a Christian partnership with all those organizations seeking to improve the quality of life of the society in which they live and work.

## NETWORKING AS A STRATEGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

In the context of Filipino Americans and other ethnic groups, the key word to Evangelism and Church Growth is networking. Evangelism is seen here as an impact of the Christian community to the community at large. The emphasis is away from the specialized activity of an individual evangelist or group of evangelists to an evangelizing Church impacting the community around them. While evangelism is not necessarily Church Growth, evangelism must have a direction towards sharing the gospel and growing a community that will become the bearer of the Good News. We are amazed at how liberal Christian churches shun from the word evangelism for fear that they might be associated with the "proselytizing" activities of the evangelical groups.

Networking in the Filipino American Church needs to take on two fronts, namely: "globalization" and "localization." Globalization has to do with partnership with Filipino churches in the Philippines and mutual sharing of personnel and funds for building religious communities among Filipino Americans. Localization has to do with partnership with Filipino American secular agencies like the FILAM Chamber of Commerce and the various grassroots community organizations operating in the United States.

Globalization has to go beyond denominationalism and party spirit. For instance, there is no reason why both the Philippine Independent Church and the American Episcopal Church could not unite organically in forming missions in the entire United States. Both have similar Catholic doctrines and history, both have experienced working together in Philippine setting, both have clergy trained in common seminaries.

In American setting, particularly in California, the Episcopal Church has material and financial resources but no adequate Filipino clergy and people whereas the Philippine Independent Church has both clergy and people but no adequate material and financial resources. Would it not redound to the glory of God and the growth of God's kingdom if both churches unite organically and allow the smooth sharing of personnel and funds towards the formation and growth of Filipino American churches and missions?



Localization needs to break down the walls of dualism as found in classical Anglo cultural value. In Filipino American mentality, both culture and religion are interrelated. While Church and State are separate under the American Constitution, it is neither illegal nor an anathema for the Christians to get involved with the social and political affairs of the society in which they live. Filipino American Christians, if they are to impact the Filipino community, must get involved with the struggle of the people for better housing, job placement and security, better education for their children, health care benefits and all those aspirations that make up for the betterment of society. They must seek to build *koinonia* (Christian fellowship) in the already existing structures---the Filipino associations, community groups and other interest groups operating in their neighborhood.

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Just like the rhythm of life, the growth cycle of the Church organization goes from birth to growth, from decay to renewal. The life cycle of the corporate Church does not necessarily go in full cycle but rather undergoes a spiral upward- downward -and upward stages of development.

In his study of the corporate life in America, Lawrence Miller derived lessons from the "rise and fall" of many civilizations and discovered that there are leadership types that characterize each stage of corporate development. In a stimulating book, *From Barbarians to Bureaucrats* (1989), Miller underscored the following stages and the leadership it entails. It provides a fitting model for the forming and growing of a Filipino American Church.

### (a) The Prophetic Stage and the Prophet

The Church is just starting. The prophet or visionary holds the vision of the group and is the main focus of its activity. He has usually a set of principles which sets him apart and he belabors to impart that character to his group. He is very idealistic and possesses high standard of commitment. The Prophet makes decisions often by himself or herself. There is minimal organization but

lots of inspiration, innovation and pioneering works. The paragons of this stage are Moses of the Hebrews, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Ghandi, Jose Rizal---and, in business, the McDonald brothers who dreamt and created the hamburger industry.

**(b) The Barbarian Stage and the Barbarian**

The Barbarian believes in the Prophet's idea but feels that its success rests entirely in his own hands. The Barbarian maybe crude but he is one that will lead the fledgling group to conquests and through crises. The organization is minimal but the action is high. The Barbarian will be on the field himself, carrying the banner and leading the troops to a life or death battle. The paragon of this stage is Attila, the Hun.

**(c) The Building and Exploring Stage and the Builder and Explorer**

The group or organization is now showing fruitfulness. However, the need is to maximize the resources and to exploit the momentum for greater growth. The mission of the Builder and Explorer is to get an edge over their competitors. In order to do that, he is to build an efficient means or production and to channel the energy of his team to maintain quality and to produce more. Specialization and expansion are his twin obsessions. The paragon of this stage is, surprisingly Ferdinand Magellan, the "discoverer " of the Philippines.

**(d) The Administrative Stage and the Administrator**

The corporation or Church has entered a stage of security in which it has mastered its primary market, built up a substantial membership and financial base, and is expanding in secondary markets. It has created impact in the community and is growing at a rapid rate. The Administrator believes in efficiency and in the good image to the community. He believes however that decisions should be made after he has all the facts. Systems, structures, procedures are very important. The paragon of an administrator in business is Lee Iacocca. In church, it maybe Robert Schuller of America or Cho Yonggi of Korea.

### **(e) The Bureaucratic Stage and the Bureaucrat**

The corporation or Church has achieved its "plateau" and the leadership has become contented. The bureaucrat believes in "professional management" but is not bothered by a slow growth. The bureaucrat may be a former administrator but now he is fatigued and wants a certain bureau to carry on the past and current assumptions. He likes written reports and he himself writes good ones. As a result, the paper flows incessantly but there is little or no new creativity. The paragon of the bureaucrat is Leonid Brezhnev of Russia.

### **(f) The Aristocratic Stage and the Aristocrat**

This is the dark age of the organization or the corporation. The Church or company has lost its sense of mission and reason for being. It is the prelude to alienation and revolution. Business is declining and debt is high. Profit is now stagnant and the stock price is declining. Aristocrats are increasingly becoming victims of the cynicism that pervades its entire organization. Instead of being creative, they seek personal enrichment and glory on past successes. They are normally aloof and detached from their constituency, perhaps to escape the grim handwritings on the walls. While there is clear formal organization, that is not where the job is getting done but in informal groups who still have the genuine desire to make the organization work and renew itself. The paragon of this stage are the dictators of many generations "whom the gods wished to destroy."

### **(g) The Synergist Stage and the Synergist**

Decline is not inevitable---only probable. The primary cause of decline is the social disintegration within. The challenge to the synergist is to break the natural cycle of rise and fall by "finding the right mix" of internal cooperation and external mission. Synergistic leaders combine the prophet, barbarian, builder, explorer and administrator in a creative way that instills a new and unifying spirit and power. Renewal, revival and continuing creativity are the three goals of the synergist. From darkness to light, from death to life---that is the rallying voice of the synergist. Jesus Christ ---the prophet, teacher, and king---is the paragon of the synergist.

Civilizations, societies and corporations we know about have had a life span. Kingdoms rise and fall. Sumer, Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Mayan civilization--and the modern day Russia---are some examples. They come into being; they flourish, or at least survive, for a time; they decay; they die.

The Church as a corporation or as a denomination is not exempt from this cycle of life and death. But thanks be to God! As the Body of Christ, God provides the Church with the "gift of renewal." Synergistic leaders takes control of the downward path of decline by breaking down rigidity and energizing the Church to the reformulation, reinterpretation and redefinition of ancient but eternal values. Christianity is a living religion and its genius is found in its ability to adjust to new contexts and situations. Synergistic leadership that provides continuing renewal is one that is needed in Filipino American and other churches.

## **FACTORS IN CHURCH GROWTH: A STUDY**

In their study of some growing churches in Santa Clara County, the "Research In Strategic Evangelization" (an evangelical group) listed at least ten key factors that contributed to growth, namely:

- 1. Visionary pastors and lay leaders.** Those who have clear visions and know how to market that vision often get results in Church growth.
- 2. Pastoral longevity.** People need a sense of stability and pastors need as much time to get to know the flock and welcome the new sheep.
- 3. Distinctive, focused ministry.** Churches that focus on their particularly stronger gift fare much better than those attempt to be "all things to all people."
- 4. Celebrative and challenging worship services.** The "baby boomers" (those born from 1946-1964) as well as the old and the young are bombarded daily by exciting TV programs. If Sunday services are dull and unimaginative, they lose out in the "competition."

**5. Excited and communicative members.** Members who extend warm welcome in church, offer hospitality to strangers and give friendly smiles are pragmatic evangelists.

**6. Caring fellowship networks.** Home cell groups, Bible study and prayer groups contribute to keeping members and gaining new ones.

**7. Effective outreach which generate a regular flow of visitors and prospects.** Fluid movement of people from place to place within the Valley makes it necessary for the Church to have a continuous evangelistic and social action program to know people and to make the Church known.

**8. Ministries that produce "conversion" growth to the "unchurched."** Transferees from other churches often have unresolved agenda (e.g. hurt by pastor, conflict with other members, etc.) that hinder their full-pledged commitment and spiritual growth.

**9. Follow-up of members and training for more leaders.** Some churches lose people in the back door as fast as they got in the front door. Sustained growth is the movement of members to a process of discipleship.

**10. Church plantings.** Contrary to other findings, a Church that intentionally plants new churches (rather than being forced to do so by schism or separation) have found results in the multiplication of members.

While any single one of these factors do not necessarily produce Church Growth, researchers find that combination of any two or more of these factors lead to some vitality and strength in a congregation. Conversely, the five factors that inhibit growth and lead to decline are: (a) lack of vision, planning and prayer; (b) maintenance ministries; (c) No evangelism, no follow-up program; (d) neglect of conversion growth; and (e) internal conflict.

## **HOLY CHILD EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SAN JOSE: AN EXAMPLE**

The **San Jose Mercury News** carried this special account of a Filipino American Church that spontaneously grew in Philadelphia:

*"They claim the Divine Infant of Cebu makes a habit of miracles in the Philippines. Pain vanishes and plagues cease. Typhoons are tamed and thunder is stilled.*

*"So perhaps it's really no surprise that the arrival in Philadelphia of the wooden statue of a faintly smiling Boy Jesus could make a miracle happen in a historic church struggling to pay its bills and keep a flock.*

*"Olde St. Augustine's is a brick and stone colonial church built with six shades of marble and the donations of George Washington and Commodore John Barry. It was the largest Roman Catholic church in 18th century Philadelphia, but its membership shrank over two centuries. By last Christmas Day (1991), the flock at early morning Mass numbered nine bowed heads.*

*"Then came the Jan. 11 enshrinement of the 12-inch Filipino Santo Nino, with its thick cape of white velvet and its embroidery of 14-karat gold. The mahogany pews of Olde St. Augustine's filled up with hundreds of Filipino worshippers. As its pastor, Rev. Walter J. Quinn, duly noted in the parish newsletter, even the meatballs at the church social seemed to multiply miraculously.*

*"Suddenly, St. Augustine had a choir. Suddenly, it needed weekly children's Masses, in a church where toddlers and infants had been rare. And suddenly, church leaders were thinking in earnest about restoring the church baroque interior instead of worrying about discontinuing the parish newsletter for lack of funds.*

*"How a colonial (American) church came to be a Filipino shrine (of Santo Nino) is a serendipitous tale. 'This is God's plan,' said Restituto Estacio, 58, a physician in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, who has been searching since 1989 for a church or a city park that the 12,200 Filipinos in the Delaware Valley could adopt as their own." ( San Jose Mercury News, Feb. 29, 1992)*

To some extent, this was how the Holy Child Episcopal Church came into existence---by "God's plan." There was no Episcopal Filipino congregation anywhere in Santa Clara Valley. There were but one family who was involved in an Episcopal Church but they have become too integrated into the mainline Anglo church that they felt no desire for ministry among Filipinos. It was therefore unthinkable that an Episcopal Church named in honor of the Santo

Nino and made up of 90% Filipino Americans and 10% Anglo Americans can be formed. Some might even think this was an "impossible dream." But it is real.

In 1989, the Asian Missioner of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real called a meeting to form a Filipino congregation for St. Philip's Parish in East San Jose. At least seven Filipinos came representing "lapsed Roman Catholic," "unchurched Protestant," and "nominal Aglipayan or Independent Catholic." the drawing magnet of the congregation was not denominational conversion but a community drawn by common love for God and for each other. Through visitations and **novenas** to the Santo Nino, the congregation grew and became an integral part of the multicultural parish of St. Philip's.

In 1991, an Anglo Episcopal mission in Evergreen, San Jose (St. Therese Episcopal Church) was in crisis. It was rapidly declining in membership, it has exhausted its subsidy and its vicar was resigning. Tired and exhausted of working for eight years without tangible results and long-term clear vision, it was ready to close down. A joint planning committee between St. Philip's and St. Therese has led to the Filipino Congregation petitioning to move into the area in order to "reconstitute" the mission and to stave off the death of the mission. On October 6, 1991, the Rt. Rev. Richard Shimpfky, Bishop of El Camino Real proclaimed the "Holy Child Episcopal Church" as a diocesan mission and appointed the Asian Missioner, the Rev. Fred Vergara as priest-in-charge.

The proclamation of the Holy Child Episcopal Church is both a "renaming of the St. Therese Episcopal Church" as well as a "marriage" between the Filipino Congregation of East San Jose (from St. Philip's) and the remnants of the Anglo congregation (from St. Therese). In his sermon during the first Holy Child's eucharist, the Rev. Jerry Drino, rector of St. Philip's described the name of the church as "unique" and "probably the first" in the Episcopal Church.

The intercultural "Bishop's Committee" (composed of Filipino and Anglo leaders) approved the Holy Child's mission statement as follows:

*The Holy Child Episcopal Church is a community of faith seeking and sharing new life in Christ.*

*Coming from many cultures, we are liberated by the Word,  
nourished by Sacraments, and united by the love of God.  
We stand on the authority of Scriptures, Tradition, Reason  
and Experience.*

The vision of the Holy Child is to grow into a Church of a thousand committed members with facilities large and adequate enough to house a wholistic ministry to the intercultural community of Evergreen, San Jose and the Santa Clara County. This vision is not only for growth in numbers but the increase in Christian spirituality. In the words of John W. Gardner, on **On Leadership**:

*"There is a risk for those who take the lead in rebuilding. People who act and initiate make mistakes. People seeking the path to the future often wind up in blind alleys. Those who have the confidence to act creatively to regenerate the society must also have the humility to know the danger of overestimating what they can accomplish."*

To most Filipino, the vision is still a dream, a seemingly impossible one. To others, God comes as maker of the impossible dreams coming true.



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## CONCLUSION

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### *THE FUTURE OF FILIPINO AMERICAN MINISTRY*

In April 9, 1990, TIME Magazine published a special issue with the cover headline, "What will the U.S. be like when Whites are no longer the majority?" It predicted that in the 21st century --- and that's not far off --- racial and ethnic groups in the United States will outnumber Whites for the first time. It gave a scenario of the "browning of America" which alters everything in society, from politics and education to industry, values and culture.

Some of these changes are the following:

1. In the future, Social Security benefit recipients will be mostly Whites, whereas majority of the workers paying for them will be non-white.
2. The issue of racial conflict will no longer be between Black and White but even between and among races. Because Hispanics are so numerous and Asians are so fast growing, they have become "hot minorities" and blacks feel their needs are getting low priority. In the recent report of the Civil Rights Commission, Asians likewise feel being discriminated against.
3. Even within the colored diversity, a pattern of conflicts is emerging. In Santa Clara County, the **San Jose Mercury News** carried special issues (from Sept. 17 to Oct. 8, 1987) that noted the ethnic changes challenging the valley. Among the observations noted were that "the Cambodians resent the Vietnamese; the Vietnamese distrust the Chinese; the Chinese mystify the Mexicans; Mexicans irritate the Mexican-Americans; Mexican Americans feel left out by the non-Hispanic Whites; Blacks resent the Hispanics and a lot of Whites go about their business as if there weren't any other ethnic groups at all."
4. Schools are being asked to change their curricula. Many books considered to be "Euro-centric" (e.g. Latin, European and English) once treasured as classics are now being seen as "tools of imperialism." Universities like Stanford are being besieged by proponents of change to alter the sociology and history

books to reflect a "value-deprived naturalism" that views all cultures, regardless of grandeur and paucity of their attainments, as essentially equal.

5. People of color often feel that Whites often treat equality as a "benevolence granted to minorities" rather than an inherent natural human right. That kind of condescension will pass away.

The "signs of the times" are already in the here-and-now. There is an emerging tug of war between those who already see the future and those who are holding on to the past. To some mainstream Americans, the U.S. will indeed be a "global village" where all peoples, races and cultures form a "salad bowl" or a rainbow coalition --- a mosaic of cultural expressions --- with no pressure of one dominating the others. To other Americans, however, the "melting pot" theory still holds. Allan Bloom, in his book, **The Closing of the American Mind**, noted:

*"The future of America can't be sustained if people keep only to their own ways and remain perpetually outside. The society has got to turn them into Americans. There are natural fears that today's immigrants maybe too much of a cultural stretch for a nation based on Western values."*

It is expected that during the next decades, many more White Americans will speak out openly about the "one nation" they feel they are losing. The re-emergence of ultra-conservative presidential candidates like Pat Buchanan and David Duke are signs that many White Americans will resist change. Thomas Bender of New York University suggests a "negotiation to define public culture" across ethnic lines:

*"If the center cannot hold, then one must redefine the center. It should be the ever changing outcome of a continuing contest among social groups and ideas for the power to define public culture." The real question is whether or not our notion of diversity can successfully negotiate the color line.*

Helping in this "negotiation," facilitating the reconciliation, assisting to hold together a highly differentiated American society ---- this is where the future of the Filipino American Ministry lies. Blessed with multiculturalism from birth, fashioned by cross-cultural experiences in their social and spiritual history, and

sustained by a living faith in God "who holds all things together", the Filipino American Christians are servants in the ministry of reconciliation. The dream that will echo throughout the Filipino American Church is the dream to be "intercultural reconcilers" like milkfish in brackish water. In the words of St. Paul, the great apostle of the resurrected Christ in his message to the intercultural Church within the multicultural city of Corinth:

*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." ( 2 Corinthians 5: 18-20)*

#### **POSTSCRIPT:**

I wrote these concluding remarks amidst the riot in South Central Los Angeles involving Blacks and other ethnic groups infuriated by the "racist verdict" on four White L.A. cops who were videotaped severely beating a Black motorist Rodney King. The riot was described as "much dangerous, much uglier" than the Watts Rebellion in 1965, also in Los Angeles. In this Riot of May 1992, a total of 57 died, more than a thousand injured and millions of homes and businesses were razed by fire and ravaged by lootings.

One section severely hit by the rioters was "Koreatown," ostensibly an object of Black's ire because of its history of animosity when in 1991 a Korean woman-grocer shot a Black girl on suspicion of shoplifting. The jury sentenced the Korean woman to probation. As multi-ethnic rioters tore the city, they also shattered the myth of racial harmony and "melting pot" theory that have been the source of adulation for this most populous and premier city in California.

As if contesting with this grim scenario in America, the Philippines held its presidential Election which was described as the "most peaceful ever" in Philippine history. This new and welcome change from the "politics as usual" was surely the result of the peaceful "people power revolution of 1986" in the

Philippines . At long last, the Filipino People have shown a higher level of political maturity. At long last, the Philippine democracy has come of age.

In the Filipino-American community in California, these two simultaneous events are like the "yin" and the "yang," the negative and the positive. It is like the manifestation of the two cities: the City of Man (which will always die) and the City of God (which will never die). More than ever, it accentuates the need of the Filipino-American Christians to look for inspiration from their own Jerusalem and to drink from their own wells to supply them with energy and vigor to become catalysts and messengers of the ever new mission of reconciliation in this most crucial period human history in America, the Philippines and the whole world.



## APPENDIX

### *FILIPINO AMERICAN MINISTRY INSTITUTE*

One of the goals of the Holy Child Episcopal Church is the development of a Filipino American Ministry Institute (FAMI) that will carry the dreams and aspirations of Filipino American ministry in the context of an intercultural Church. The FAMI is an agency that will fulfill the need for an concerted and wholistic "Education for Ministry" for the Holy Child as follows:

#### STAGE

#### AREAS OF MINISTRY

##### I. (PARISH BASED)

Evangelistic Bible Study  
Baptism, Confirmation  
Training Modules

Choir, Usher, Acolytes,  
Altar Guild, Readers,  
Cell Group members,  
Sunday School, etc.

##### 2. (REGIONAL CENTER)

Intercultural Training for Sensitivity  
Evangelism & Church Growth  
Ministry Probes & Surveys  
Filipino American Ministry

Cell Group Leaders,  
Program directors,  
Committee officers,  
Subdeacons, Vestry

##### 3. (DIOCESAN CENTER)

Short-term Biblical Studies  
Contextual Theological Studies  
Diploma Courses

Parish Workers, Teachers,  
Lay Evangelists, Ordinands,  
Deacons

##### 3. (NATIONAL BASED)

Bible Colleges & Theological Schools  
Degree, Graduate Courses

Ordinands, Full-time ministers:  
Lay and ordained

The FAMI envisions the Church as articulated by Bishop Richard Shimpfky to be "a campus, a community center and a church." The Church is the People

of God who sit at the feet of Jesus learning His Word and Examples; the Church is a Building that houses and serves the community needs; the Church is the Fellowship of believers who seeks and shares new life in Christ.

The ministry of FAMI in Santa Clara County is on three fronts, namely: (1) Leadership Training (2) Immigrants Ministry and (3) Family Church Ministry. Immigrants ministry involves legal and job referrals assistance and cultural adjustment and ESL classes; Family church Ministry involves counselling and serving families encountering family problems. **Leadership Training seminars** are as follows:

#### **A. INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING**

This training sensitizes participants to the diversity of cultures and the process in which people of various cultures interact. The training hopes to make participants become more tolerant and less judgmental of other races, cultures, faiths and ideologies. Differences and similarities between and among cultural values are discussed. Participants are then challenged to work out a "third culture" that fits the context. Outline of this weekend workshop as follows:

##### **Registration**

**Orientation:** *"Dynamics of Inter-Cultural Interaction"*

**Lecture:** *"1st Culture: Filipino Cultural Values"*

**Group Sharing:** *"Describe your first coming to the U.S. and what impressed you with regards to differences in values" (For new immigrants).*

*"Share some conflict-situations that happened in your past experience with other cultural groups" (For longtime-residents)*

##### **Lunch**

**Lecture:** *"2nd Culture: American (Anglo) Cultural Values"*

**Group Sharing:** *"Imagine yourself being married or working with a person not belonging to your culture. What would you find hard to adjust?"*

**Lecture:** *"Filipino American: Towards a 3rd Culture?"*

**Individual Time:** *Do exercise*

**Wrap-up:** *"Christ, the Transformer of Cultures"*

The Intercultural Sensitivity Training of the FAMI has become a model for other cultural groups to develop their own. It is hoped that eventually we would develop a training that encompasses a pluralistic cultural model that involves a number of cultural groups being represented.

## **B. CELL GROUPS MINISTRY WORKSHOP**

Cell groups system is the key to evangelism and Church Growth. Cells derive itself from the understanding of the Church as the "Body of Christ." Like "cells" (the basic particle), the Church Body grows with the multiplication of cell groups. The intercultural congregation is divided into homogenous cell groups: youth, Ilocano, Bisaya, Anglo, Chinese, Vietnamese, elderly, factory workers, etc..

At its initial stage, the cell groups at Holy Child serves three purposes, namely: (a) evangelistic, they invite new members; (b) pastoral care, they met to pray and do bible-study; (c) ministry, they take turns in sponsoring potluck meal and fellowships.

The outline of the initial Cell Groups Ministry Workshop is as follows:

### **Registration**

**Orientation:** *"Image of the Church as Body of Christ"*

**Lecture:** *"The Biblical Basis of Cell Groups"*

*A. Old Testament - Moses paradigm*

*B. New Testament - Jesus paradigm*

*C. Early Church - "house churches" paradigm*

### **Discussion**

**Lecture:** *"How to Start Cell Groups"*

### **Discussion:**

**Organization:** *"Choosing and Motivating Cell Leaders"*

**Challenge:** *"Cell Groups Ministry Vision"*

### **C. DOING A MINISTRY PROBE OF THE COMMUNITY**

This training is gained from the Filipino Ministry Probe done by the Presbytery of San Jose in 1987. Since then, many changes have taken place. An innovative way is to start with the probe of a Church or congregation as a "probing agency" rather than an individual or a group. It would be best if the whole Church participates in the community survey with a Church Growth Team monitoring the results. Otherwise, a team will do the whole survey. The workshop will be in two phases:

#### **Part One: Surveying the Church Growth Potential**

- 1. Survey of Personal Information for Each Church Member*
- 2. Survey of their attitude towards the Church*
- 3. Survey of their involvement to the Church*
- 4. Survey of their readiness to take on community Survey*

#### **Part Two: Surveying the Community**


- 1. Collection of data from Census and Community Groups*
- 2. Designing a Survey Questionnaire*
- 3. Analyzing the Results & Recommendation*
- 4. Goal Setting & Planning Cycle*
- 5. Implementation and Evaluation*



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*Blessed with multiculturalism from birth, fashioned by cross-cultural experience in their social and spiritual history, and sustained by a living faith in God "who holds all things together" - the Filipino American Christians are servants of the ministry of reconciliation. The dream that will echo throughout the Filipino American Church is the dream to be intercultural reconcilers like the milkfish in brackish water.*



#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

The Rev. Dr. Wenifredo B. Vergara is the Asian Missioner of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real and priest-in-charge of a Filipino American Intercultural Church, the Holy Child Episcopal Church in San Jose, California. He also serves as chairman of the diocesan Task Force on Intercultural Ministry and director of the Religious Sector of the Filipino American Council of Santa Clara County. He was ordained priest in 1978 and worked in the Philippine Independent Church for three years, became a missionary in the Anglican Church in Singapore in 1980-1986, and came to the United States as an immigrant in 1986. He completed B.A. in Political Science in 1973 and Masters in Divinity in 1978 in the Philippines; Masters in Theology in 1984 in Singapore; and a Doctor of Ministry in 1989 in San Francisco, California.